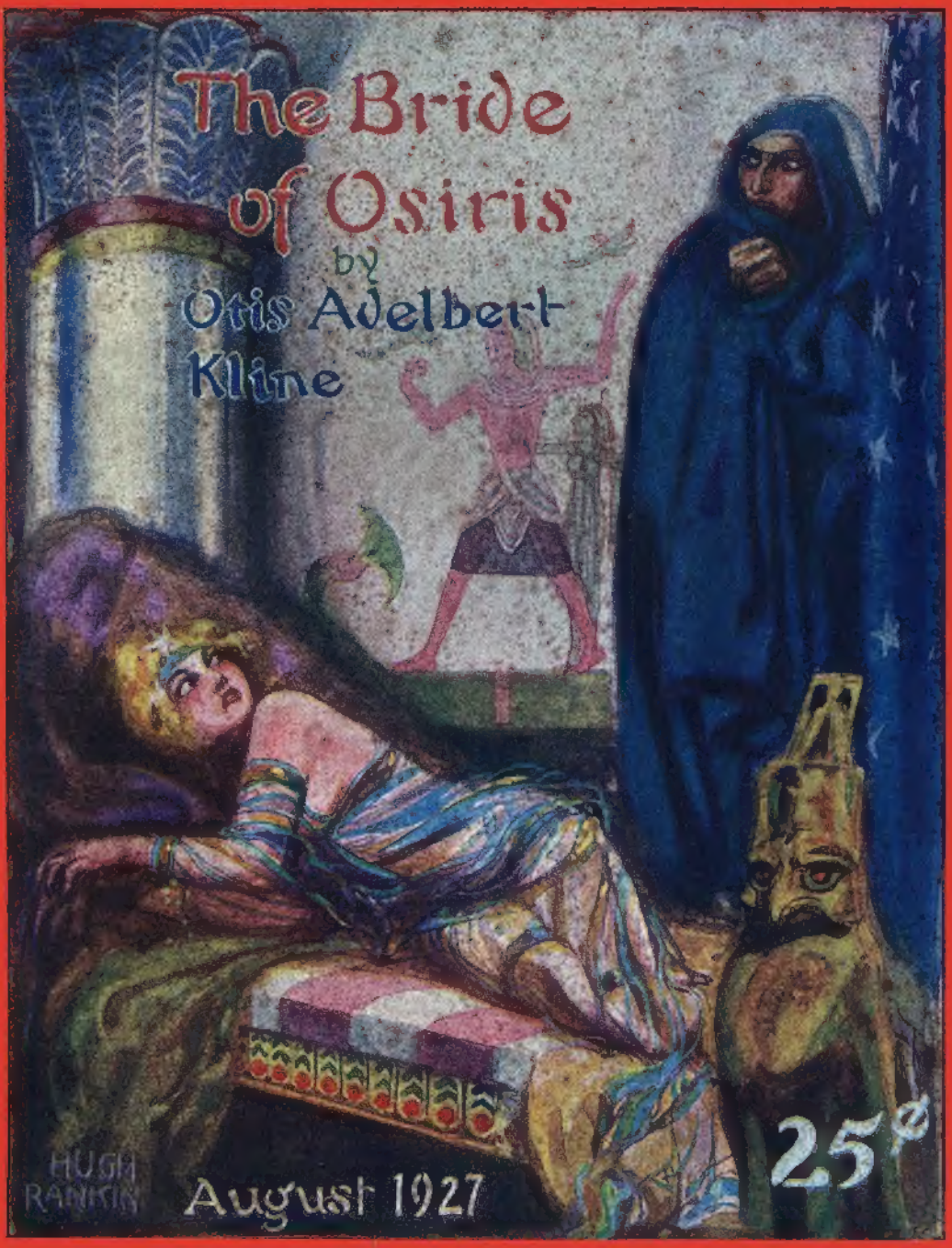
Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine



Eli Colter—Seabury Quinn—Frank Belknap Long, Jr.
George Malcolm-Smith—B. Wallis—Wilfred B. Talman

AUGUST, 1927

WEIRD TALES

Printed in U. S. A.

Vol. X, No. 2—25c

21 JEWEL~*Extra Thin*

STUDEBAKER

The Insured Watch

Sent for Only

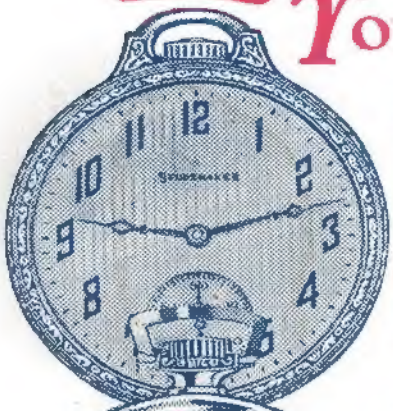
$1 DOWN

Direct from Factory

You Save 30% to 50%

An amazing offer! Just $1.00 down brings you the famous 21 Jewel Studebaker Watch direct from factory. Balance in easy monthly payments. You save fully 30% to 50%. Lowest prices ever named for equal quality. Send coupon below for catalog of Advance Watch Styles and full particulars.

This amazing offer enables you to pay for your watch while wearing it. Studebaker Watches have 21 Jewels, genuine rubies and sapphires. 8 adustments—for heat, cold, isochronism and five positions. Insured for your lifetime! Insurance Policy given FREE! Ladies' Bracelet Watches, Men's Strap Watches, Diamonds and Jewelry also sold direct to you at lowest prices and on easy monthly payments. Open a charge account with us. Send the coupon.



Save on Ladies' Bracelet Watches and Strap Watches for Men. Both are sold on the easiest kind of payments!

WRITE *for* FREE CATALOG

The coupon below will bring you a copy of our beautiful, new six-color catalog showing 80 magnificent, new Art Beauty cases and dials. Latest designs in yellow gold, green gold and white gold effects. Exquisite thin models. 12 size and 16 size. Buy a 21 Jewel Studebaker Insured Watch direct from the maker—save big money and pay for it in easy monthly payments.

Special Limited Offer: Watch Chain Free

For a limited time we are offering a Magnificent Watch Chain Free. To all who write immediately we will include particulars of this astounding special offer. This offer is limited. Send the coupon at once—before it expires.

STUDEBAKER WATCH COMPANY

Directed by the Studebaker Family—three-quarters of a century of fair dealing

WATCHES DIAMONDS JEWELRY

Dept. T-801 • South Bend, Indiana

Canadian Address: Windsor, Ontario

Mail Coupon at Once While This Offer Lasts

Studebaker Watch Co. Dept. T-801 South Bend, Indiana

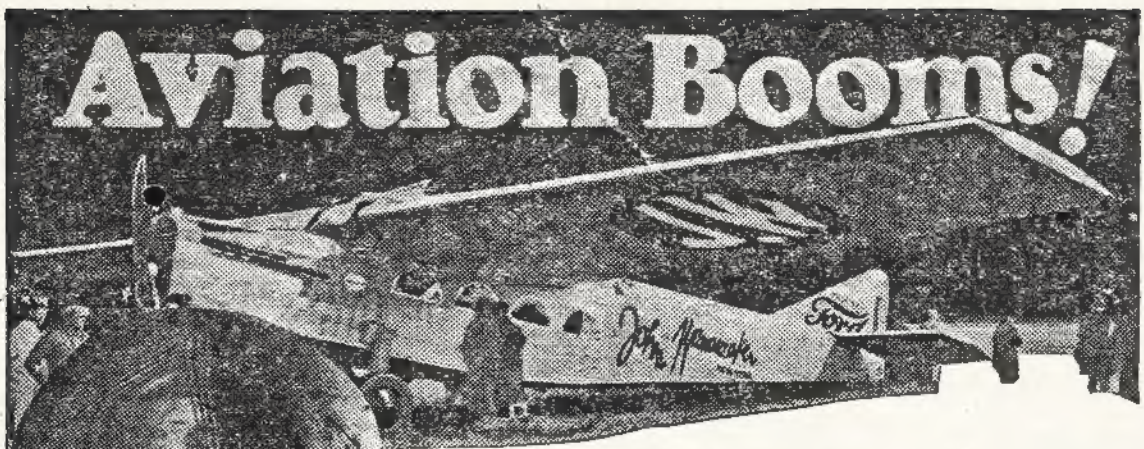
☐ Please send me your free catalog of Advance Watch Styles and details of your $1.00 down offer.

☐ Please send me free catalog of Jewelry and Diamonds.

Name .....

Street or R. F. D. .....

City ..... *State* .....



If You Want Thrills-Popularity-Big Pay LEARN AVIATION *QUICK!*

Aviation With All Its Fascinating Adventure, Demands Red-Blooded Young Men! And Will Pay Them Magnificent Sums! Read How Aviation's Best-Known Pioneers Will Help YOU to Qualify for One of the Big Jobs! Send Today for Your Copy of Our FREE Illustrated Book, Listing and Describing Positions That Pay $4000 to $10,000 a Year!

AVIATION, the most thrilling of all 20th century professions, is growing so swiftly that one can hardly keep track of all the astonishing new developments. Air-mail routes have just been extended to form a vast aerial network over the entire U. S. Air-lines and airplane factories are springing up all over the country. Men like Henry Ford are investing millions in the future of commercial Aeronautics in America! The possibilities are so tremendous that they stagger imagination!

Everything is set for the greatest boom in history. The fortunes that came out of the automobile industry and out of motion pictures will be nothing compared to the fortunes that will come out of Aviation! There is just one thing holding it up—lack of trained men! Even in the beginning thousands will be needed—and generously paid. The opportunities open to them cannot be over-estimated. Those who qualify quickly will find themselves on the road to undreamed of money—success—popularity—and prominence!

PICK YOUR JOB!

- Airplane Instructor
- Airplane Engineer
- Airplane Repairman
- Airplane Assembler
- Airplane Mechanician
- Airplane Inspector
- Airplane Builder
- Airplane Salesman
- Exhibition Manager
- Airplane Contractor
- Airplane Motor Expert
- Airplane Designer

Start by Becoming an Aviation Expert This Easy Way

Think what Aviation offers you. Thrills such as you never had before! The praise and plaudits of the multitude. And a chance to get in on the ground floor where rewards will be unlimited!

Get into this thrilling profession at once while the field is new and uncrowded. Now—by a unique new plan—you can quickly secure the basic training for one of these wonderful high salaries jobs, at home, in spare time. Experts will teach you the secrets—give you all the inside facts that are essential to your success. And, better yet, the study of Aviation is almost as fascinating as the actual work itself. Every Lesson is chock-full of interest—and so absorbing that you actually forget you are studying. But best of all are the ultimate rewards you are fitting yourself to gain!

Send for FREE Book

Send the coupon for our new, free book, just out—"Opportunities in the Airplane Industry." It is vitally interesting, reads like a romance and tells you things about this astonishing profession you never even dreamed of. This book is so fascinating it could easily sell for a dollar. We offer a limited number FREE. Write for yours today.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF AVIATION
Dept. 245-C, 3601 Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

American School of Aviation,
Dept. 245-C, 3601 Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Without any obligation please send me FREE book "Opportunities in the Airplane Industry." Also information about your course in Practical Aeronautics.

Name_____ Age_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME X NUMBER 2

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, $2.50 a year in the United States; $3.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Sergeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 450 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1927, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for August, 1927

Cover Design ..... **Hugh Rankin**
Illustrating a scene in "The Bride of Osiris"

The Eyrie **148**
A chat with the readers

The Bride of Osiris (Part 1) ..... **Otis Adelbert Kline** **151**
A three-part Egyptian serial story of Osiris, the Festival of Re, strange murders, the Am-mits, and the dungeons of Karncter

Satan's Fiddle ..... **George Malcolm-Smith** **173**
The cataclysmic power of music—the death chord—and hideous dissonances that can cause a building to crumble

The Power of the Dog ..... **G. G. Pendarves** **188**
A tale of Arabian black magic, and the terrifying fate that befell two Englishmen at the hands of Daouad

(Continued on Next Page)

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

(Continued from Preceding Page)

Creeping Shadows ..... **Seabury Quinn** **193**

Out of the darkness crept two shapes—and their coming was followed by mysterious deaths—a tale of Jules de Grandin

Lake Desolation ..... **Leavenworth Macnab** **206**

Verse

Fly Island ..... **B. Wallis** **207**

Gigantic insects flashed through the air and stung to death all men or animals that approached their lair

The Man With a Thousand Legs .. **Frank Belknap Long, Jr.** **219**

A horror-tale of the sea—a bizarre and fantastic story about a weird and terrible monster

The Phantom Photoplay ..... **Terva Gaston Hubbard** **235**

A ghost-story of the motion picture industry—Martini, the raja of the films, boasted that he always collected his debts

The Swamp ..... **Cristel Hastings** **241**

Verse

The Dark Chrysalis (Conclusion) ..... **Eli Colter** **242**

The epic of the microbe-hunters—a three-part serial story dealing with the terrible scourge of cancer

Two Black Bottles ..... **Wilfred Blanch Talman** **251**

Old Dominie Vanderhoof was dead, but he did not rest in his grave, for evil was afoot in the old Dutch church

Who Killed Jack Robbins ..... **Robert Lee Heiser** **259**

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are evoked out of mist and moonbeams to save Kitty Robbins from a gruesome murder

Beethoven ..... **Robert S. Carr** **266**

Verse

Weird Story Reprint

The Queen of Spades ..... **Alexander Pushkin** **267**

The old duchess knew three cards that would win for the young officer—a weird tale translated from the Russian

---

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:
YOUNG & WARD, Mgrs.
360 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Ill.
Phone, State 1861

Eastern Advertising Office:
GEORGE W. STEARNS, Mgr.
Flatiron Building
New York, N. Y.
Phone, Ashland 7329

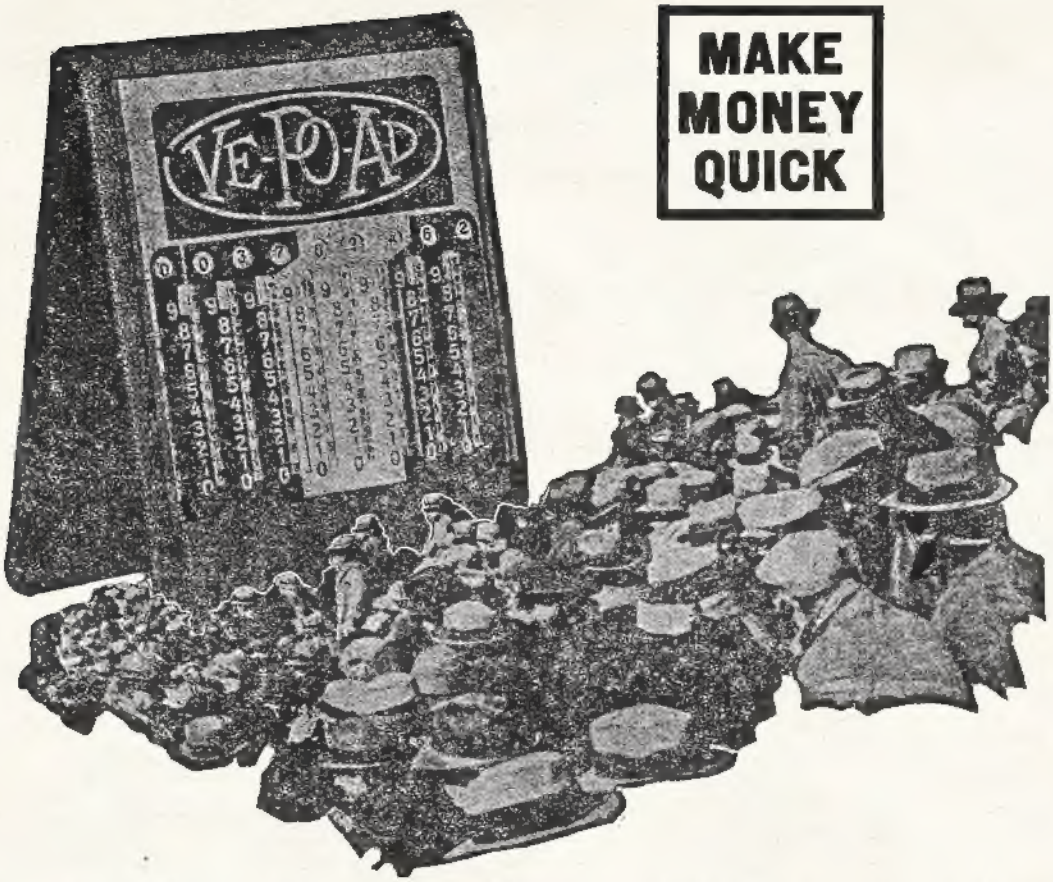
THERE have been just five dissenting voices amid the chorus of praise for Ray Cummings' remarkable interplanetary serial, *Explorers Into Infinity,* which ended in the June issue of WEIRD TALES. Two readers wrote in that they did not like the story, and three others liked the story but not the ending. "One would gain the idea that the author knew we were all dumb-bells," writes Mrs. W. Lange, of Portland, Oregon, one of the two who disliked the story, "and of course we wouldn't understand what he was trying to convey, so he explained so long and tediously that I was dreadfully bored, being away ahead of him in comprehension while he was still trying to explain what was clear to me in a few words." And C. H. Paple, of Lansing, Ontario, writes: "I did not care for *Explorers Into Infinity* much, there were so many technical phrases which dulled the interest of the story. But as a constant reader of WEIRD TALES for the past two years, I can truthfully say it is the finest, cleanest and most thrilling book that ever came into my hands."

Ralph McCormack, of Ashland, Oregon, writes to The Eyrie: "I have just finished *Explorers Into Infinity* and don't like the way it ended. For I would like to know if Brett ever got back or not, and what happened to him, whether he was lost in Space and Time or killed by some of the giants. I would like to have a sequel and I think many more would, too."

"The one mistake Ray Cummings made in his story, *Explorers Into Infinity,*" writes "Interested Reader," "is the abrupt ending of it. It is a great story otherwise."

"Ray Cummings' very excellent novelette, *Explorers Into Infinity,* has but concluded as I write," says D. E. Helmuth, of Cleveland, Ohio. "I have gleefully read all three parts. Now from time to time you have given us stories which have made a strong impression on me (like *Drome* or the Lovecraft tales), but none of them (with the possible exception of *The Woman of the Wood*) has affected me as has Mr. Cummings' tale. The construction, the realistic sequence of events and the telling of the story are such as to produce a lasting impression. After you have recovered from the first shock you readily fall in with the general scheme of things. The story is incomplete. Of course Brett Gryce arrived safely. Leela was waiting for him, or was she taken by those dwindling giants? Did Brett follow her to the land of those giants? Did Brett get the sort of reception he deserved? We must assuredly have a sequel. Please induce Mr. Cummings to give us one. *Ex-*

(Continued on page 283)



MAKE MONEY QUICK

7 Out of 10 Are Prospects!

If You Sell VE-PO-AD

The New Vest Pocket Adding Machine

Men, here is a wonder! If you're looking for a rapid-fire seller—an item that sells for a popular price—an item that nets you 100 per cent profit—an item that appeals to 7 out of 10 men—an item that sells itself on demonstration—I've got it! Is it any wonder that scores of my men are reporting sales of

$200 a Week—Easily!

Yes, that's what most of them are doing. Shapiro, of California, cleaned up over $475 in one week. Many others do almost as well, and **it's easy work,** for VE-PO-AD sells itself on demonstration.

VE-PO-AD is without a doubt one of the cleverest, most ingenious inventions of the last 25 years. A complete and accurate adding machine that will do all the work of a $300 machine, yet fits into your vest pocket and retails for only $2.95! What's more, you make **100 per cent on every sale!** VE-PO-AD counts clear up to 999,999,999, operates like lightning, can be cleared by a pull of the finger, and yet

Sells for Only $2.95

It's almost unbelievable that $2.95 could buy so much. This remarkable invention is truly vest-pocket size. Only ⅜ inch thick, 5 inches long and 3¼ inches wide. Handsomely bound in blue leatherette cover. Face is of etched brass. Works easily and silently. So simple a child can learn to operate it in three minutes.

100% Profit for You

Frankly, I don't know of any other proposition which retails for $2.95 that will net you a profit of 100 per cent. Yet that's exactly what I offer you—**100 per cent profit on every sale.** And just stop to think for a minute what a big field there is in your own territory for an article like this! Every storekeeper on Main Street needs it—merchants, farmers, storekeepers, housewives—in fact, everybody will find VE-PO-AD a big aid in the daily use of figures. Surely, no other article has so universal an appeal.

Mail Coupon Today For Sample Machine

There is only one way for you to appreciate what a money-maker VE-PO-AD will be for you, and that is to send me the coupon and let me put a machine in your hands so you can see it, use it and prove that all my claims are true. Although VE-PO-AD sells regularly for $2.95, I will furnish you one at the special price of $1.65, with the understanding that this amount will be credited to you on your first order for five machines, or that if you can not see the sales possibilities of VE-PO-AD, you can return this sample machine to me within ten days and your money will be refunded in full. There are no strings attached to this offer. It's genuine and 100 per cent fair to you. If you are really interested in making money and in earning a substantial, steady income, investigate VE-PO-AD today. Mail the coupon now and let me put you on the way to big money.

SPECIAL OFFER

C. M. Cleary, Sales Mgr.,
Reliable Adding Machine Corp.,
Dept. 79-B,
184 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

Please send me one VE-PO-AD, for which I will pay postman the wholesale price of $1.65, plus a few cents delivery charges. (If you wish, you may enclose $1.65 and machine will be sent postpaid.) I understand that I may return this machine within 10 days and you will refund my money, or that you will credit me with this sum on my first order for five or more machines.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

RELIABLE ADDING MACHINE CORPORATION

Dept. 79-B 184 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.

I Turned To Ice When I Tried To Talk

—But Now I Can Sway An Audience of Thousands!

I HAD always been painfully bashful. When trying to carry on even the most commonplace conversation my voice would sound unnatural and my hands and knees would tremble. Often I would listen to an argument among a group and become so keenly interested that I would want to voice my own opinion—yet timidity would keep me silent. I never had the courage to stand up for what I knew to be my rights—I was always afraid of "what people will say," ridicule. Since my childhood I had had a secret desire to appear in public—to be active in politics—but my shyness was so great that I turned to ice when I tried to talk—in even the smallest gathering!

My inability to talk was also affecting my business success. I dreaded going in and asking for a raise—I was afraid of any situation that meant using my voice—having to express myself. I didn't know how to present the ideas which I was sure the firm could use. I was just a plodder—a truck horse, capable of doing a lot of heavy work but of no use where brilliant performance was required. Often I would see men who were not half so thorough nor so hard working as I, promoted to positions where they made a brilliant showing—not through hard work, but through their ability to talk cleverly and convincingly—to give the appearance of being efficient and skillful.

In Fifteen Minutes a Day

And then suddenly I discovered a new easy method which made me a forceful speaker almost overnight. I learned how to dominate one man or an audience of thousands—how to say just the right words at the right time, how to win and hold the attention of those around me, how to express my thoughts simply and clearly, yet in a pleasing, interesting and amusing way. In just a few months I was able to make campaign speeches for a local candidate—I who a short time before had turned to ice when I tried to carry on an ordinary conversation!

Soon I had won salary increases, promotion, popularity, power. Today I always have a ready flow of speech at my command. I am able to rise to any occasion, to meet any emergency with just the right words, to approach all types of people with ease and fearlessness. And I accomplished all this by developing the natural power of speech possessed by everyone, but cultivated by so few—by simply spending 15 minutes a day in my own home on this most fascinating subject.

15 Minutes a Day Will Show You—

- How to talk before your club or lodge
- How to propose and respond to toasts
- How to address board meetings
- How to tell entertaining stories
- How to make a political speech
- How to make after-dinner speeches
- How to converse interestingly
- How to write letters
- How to sell more goods
- How to train your memory
- How to enlarge your vocabulary
- How to develop self-confidence
- How to acquire a winning personality
- How to strengthen your will-power and ambition
- How to become a clear, accurate thinker
- How to develop your power of concentration
- How to become master of any situation

Send for This Amazing Book

This new method of training is fully described in a very interesting and informative booklet which is now being sent to everyone mailing the coupon below. This book is called, *"How To Work Wonders With Words."* In it you are shown how to conquer stage fright, self-consciousness, timidity, bashfulness and fear—those things that keep you silent while men of lesser ability get what they want by the sheer power of convincing speech. Not only men who have made millions, but thousands have sent for this book—and are unstinting in their praise of it. You are told how to bring out and develop your priceless "hidden knack"—the natural gift within you—which will win for you advancement in position and salary, popularity, social standing, power and real success. You can obtain your copy absolutely free by sending the coupon.

Now Sent FREE

NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
3601 Michigan Ave. Dept. 245-C
Chicago, Illinois

North American Institute,
3601 Michigan Ave., Dept. 245-C,
Chicago, Illinois.

Please send me FREE and without obligation my copy of your inspiring booklet, "How to Work Wonders With Words," and full information regarding your Course in Effective Speaking.

Name _____

Address _____

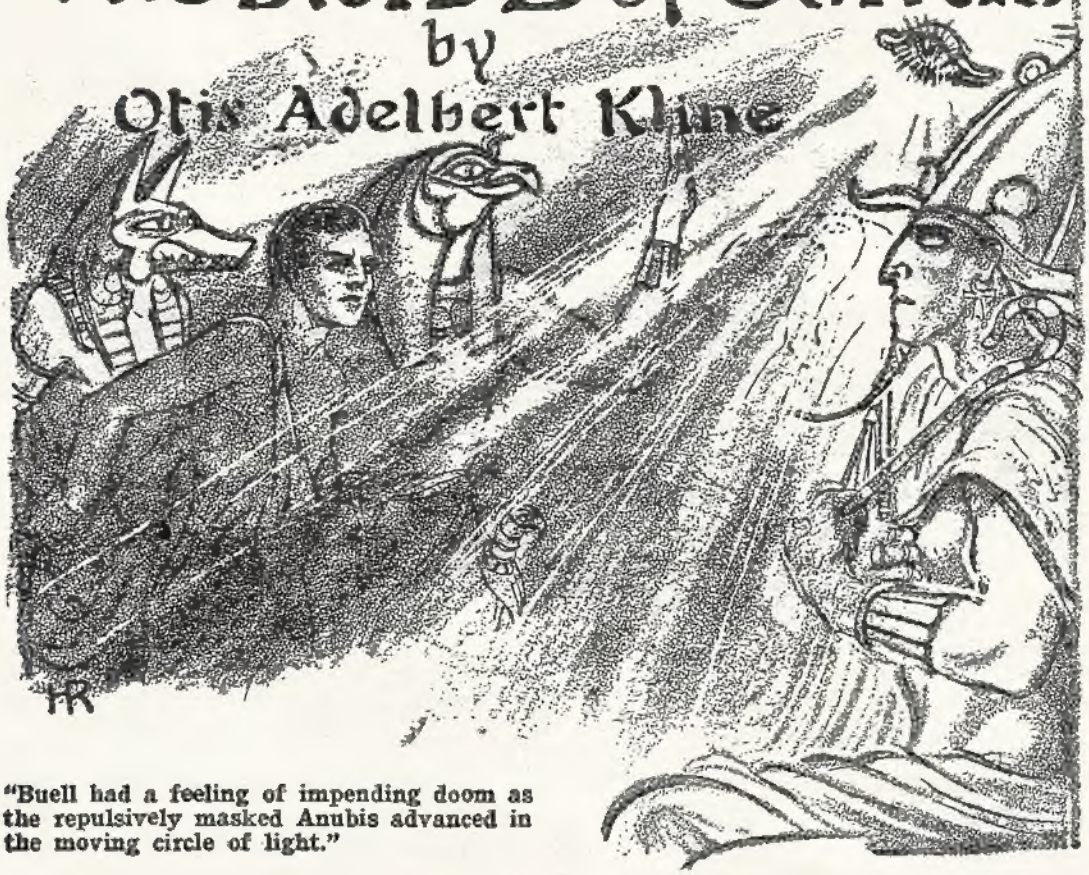
City _____ State _____

_____

The BRIDE of OSIRIS

by

Otis Adelbert Kline



"Buell had a feeling of impending doom as the repulsively masked Anubis advanced in the moving circle of light."

CHAPTER 1

THE POCK-MARKED MAN

"ALAN, that man has followed us here! Look!"

Alan Buell glanced guardedly in the direction indicated by the frightened blue eyes of his dancing partner. He saw two men seated at a table edging the dance floor. The one nearest him did not appear extraordinary—just a plain man-about-town, middle-aged and a bit portly—the kind one meets at every turn in Chicago's places of amusement. The other presented a striking figure. He was tall and broad-shouldered and sat with the erect carriage of a soldier. A black, square-cut beard hid the lower part of his features, accentuating the prominence of his aquiline nose, above which his heavy eyebrows met in a straight line. In his piercing black eyes as they swept the room was the look of one accustomed to command.

Alan's eyes returned to those of his troubled fiancée as the intervening dancers shut the black-bearded man from view, and he smiled slightly.

"I don't know that we can do anything about it, Doris," he said. "This is a free country, you know, and we're in a public café."

Doris Lee pouted prettily.

"I wish you would be serious for just one minute, Alan. You know that man has stared at me across the orchestra pit all season. I haven't been able to enjoy the opera one bit

on account of him. Now he grows bolder and follows us to this café. Of course he hasn't done anything one could openly resent, but I've noticed his covert glances time and again, and I'm afraid."

"Perhaps," replied Alan, dryly, "he thought you were staring at him and was trying to confirm his suspicions."

"Alan Buell, you *are* exasperating tonight. If you could only realize how I feel. Why, I fairly shudder every time we pass that table."

When they passed the black-bearded man again Alan looked at him with unconcealed ire. He was lazily lighting a long Oriental cigarette, the while he attended the animated conversation of his companion.

The music stopped with a raucous syncopated wail and they returned to their table.

"If that man makes you nervous let's go somewhere else," suggested Alan.

He summoned the waiter and asked for the check.

"I don't believe I care to dance any more. My nerves are in shreds. Take me home, please."

As they made their way between the tables many admiring glances were cast on Doris by the late diners. Alan noticed them, and although he had always been proud of her sparkling beauty, somehow he resented the attentions paid her at the moment. He looked sharply at the black-bearded man, but that individual still appeared absorbed in the conversation of his pudgy companion.

Pausing to don his topcoat at the check stand while Doris walked slowly ahead, Alan suddenly heard a scream of terror. He ran forward, hatless, an awful fear gripping his heart. The doorman, resplendent in blue and gold braid, lay on the floor, blood trickling from a gash in his temple. Beyond him two men were dragging Doris, kicking, struggling and screaming, into a waiting car!

Alan reached the running board with a frantic leap, just as the car started. He wrenched at the handle of the rear door but found it locked. A brutal, pock-marked face glared out at him. Beyond that face he saw Doris still struggling with the second man. In desperation he smashed the glass with his bare fist, and reaching within, grappled with the man with the pock-marked face.

The second abductor, seeing his companion in danger, suddenly whipped a blackjack from his pocket and brought it into play. At the first blow Alan hung on doggedly, but at the second he toppled from the now rapidly moving car, rolled over and over, and struck the curbing with a crash. Then came oblivion.

CHAPTER 2

THE MYSTIC SYMBOL

When Alan Buell regained consciousness he was propped against the curbing, supported by two men. One was short and rotund of body, with a pink, babylike face. The other was a huge, burly individual with a bristling, iron-gray mustache and a half-concealed twinkle about his eyes that belied the frowning brow.

"Feeling better, boy?" he asked.

"I feel all right," responded Alan, weakly attempting to rise. "Where's Doris?"

"Whoa! Not so fast, lad, not so fast," said the big man, restraining him. "Rest for a minute or two. Then we'll let the doctor decide whether you leave in an ambulance or a taxi."

"Is Doris safe?" he asked, still struggling to get up.

"Don't know yet," replied the big man, and there was a note of kindness in his voice despite its gruffness. "Four flivver squads are chasing the

kidnapers, and the police all over the city are on the lookout for them. They ought to run them down soon."

A coupé stopped near them with shrieking brakes, and a slender, gray-haired man carrying a surgical case stepped out.

"You made good time, Doc," boomed the big man.

"Not so bad, Chief," was the reply. He stopped beside Alan and examined him with deft, exploring fingers.

"No broken bones, only a few bruises and scratches," he announced. "The left hand seems badly lacerated."

For the first time Alan became conscious of the fact that his left hand pained him severely. The fingers were tightly clenched and ragged cuts smeared with half-dried blood showed on the knuckles.

"Looks as if you had been teasing a wildcat," said the surgeon, moistening some cotton with the fluid from a bottle taken from his case. "Relax those muscles, man. Give your blood a chance to work for you."

Alan opened his fingers stiffly. As he did so a small, glittering object fell from his grasp, clattering to the pavement.

With a grunt of surprize, the big man retrieved it, then examined it curiously while the doctor dressed the injured digits. Presently he handed it to his shorter companion.

The latter, as soon as he saw it, showed intense amazement.

"My God, Chief!" he exclaimed; "what is such a symbol doing here?"

"Know what it represents?"

"Not in modern society. It's like a voice from the tomb. I once studied——" He hesitated and looked significantly at Alan and the doctor. "Tell you about it later."

"All right." The big man took it from him, turned it a few times under the light, and dropped it in his vest pocket.

"Guess you've been holding out on us, lad," he said, when Alan, his hand swathed in bandages, was assisted to his feet. "I think you had better come along over to headquarters."

"Who are you, anyhow?" asked Alan.

"I'm McGraw. This man is Hirsch, head of our fingerprint department. The man who dressed your wounds is Dr. Brown."

Alan had read much of the activities of Chief of Detectives McGraw, and now recognized him as the subject of numerous photographs published in the newspapers when particularly striking exploits of his department had been brought to the public notice.

"Guess I should have recognized you before, Chief," said Alan, "but my head was sort of fuddled from the blackjack."

"Used a blackjack on you, did they?" said the chief good-naturedly. "Didn't know whether you got those bumps before you fell or when you lit."

"I wouldn't have fallen so easily without them."

"No, I guess you wouldn't, lad. Witnesses said you put up a pretty stiff fight, but they couldn't see the clouts you got in the cab. My car is parked down by the café. We'll get it and drive to headquarters."

The drive to headquarters, only four blocks distant, was a matter of minutes, but they seemed like hours to Alan, impatient for news of Doris. As he alighted from the car, his head still reeling from the blows of the kidnapers, it seemed that he was experiencing a hideous nightmare—that he must presently awaken to find it all a dream. When they reached the outer office the voice of the chief addressing a pale, slender young fellow industriously pounding the keys of a typewriter, recalled him to grim reality.

"Any news of the kidnaped girl, Jamison?" he inquired.

"Nothing yet, Chief."

"Come into my office and bring your notebook."

They followed the chief into the private office. He waved them to seats, unlocked his desk, raised the roll top and sat down heavily. From a lower drawer he produced a box, and offered some thick black cigars to all in turn. Jamison politely refused and Hirsch took a cigar. Alan looked at the stalwart Havanas with some misgivings.

"Have a smoke," said the chief. "It'll quiet your nerves."

Somewhat in doubt about the effect on his nerves, Alan complied.

McGraw tucked a cigar far back in his cheek, lighted it, and leaned across the glass-topped table. Jamison rapidly thumbed the pages of his notebook, stopped, and held his pencil in readiness.

"Your name and address," said McGraw.

"Alan Buell, 18 Circle Court," he replied.

"You're not the son of Will Buell, the importer?"

"Will Buell is my father."

McGraw turned to Jamison.

"Put down 'Buell & Son, Importers, West Kinzie Street.' "

The chief toyed for a moment with the small glittering object that had dropped from Alan's hand.

"Who was the young lady with you?"

"Doris Lee, my fiancée, daughter of Professor Lee of Evanston."

"Where did you get *this?*" The chief leaned forward suddenly and thrust the glittering object under Alan's nose. It was a flat, square piece of beaten gold with a small ring, to which were attached a few links of chain. On one side a burnished convex disk stood out in relief. On the other was a raised figure of a throne surmounted by an eye.

Alan looked puzzled.

"I don't know," he replied. "I never saw the thing before. What does it represent?"

"You know well enough what it represents or you wouldn't have tried to hide it from me."

"But I didn't try to hide it."

"What?" The chief scowled unbelievingly at him across the table.

"I think he's tellin' the truth, Chief," Hirsch cut in. "Looks to me like he tore it off one of the kidnapers in the fight and had a kind of death-grip on it when they knocked him out."

"Maybe you're right at that. It looked suspicious the way he clutched it and then dropped it on the pavement. There are so many secret societies these days a man doesn't know whom to trust."

"I can assure you that I don't belong to any of them," said Alan with some show of spirit.

"I believe you, lad, but you know it's the business of a detective to examine every possibility. I suggest that you jump in a taxi and go home now. We will notify Miss Lee's parents and do all we can to save her. You're not in shape to be of any help around here and a night's rest will do you good. I'll ring you up as soon as we get news of the girl."

CHAPTER 3

A CLUE AND A TRAP

The next morning Chief McGraw, his after-breakfast cigar tucked snugly in his cheek, drove up before headquarters and was about to step out of his car when he saw something across the street that caused him to pause in astonishment. Then, quickly leaping out, he crossed to where a cab was parked near the curb. He peered inside and saw Alan Buell, still in evening clothes, his head bandages awry and those on his hand presenting a rather soiled appearance, curled up on the cushions, sound

asleep. He addressed the driver, who was nodding drowsily over the wheel.

"Where the devil have you been all night?"

"If you'd ask me where we ain't been I could tell you better," replied the driver. "Are you a friend of dis guy?"

"I'm McGraw of the detective bureau."

"Holy cats! We didn't do nothin' but drive around, east, west, north and south. He slipped me fifty bucks and kept me goin' first one way, then another. At six bells this mornin' we're clear to the city limits on the north side and I asks him where to. He says come back here. When we get here he's poundin' his ear just like you see him, so I park the car and wait for him to wake up. He's still got about ten bucks worth of service comin'."

"All right. Let him sleep. I suppose he'll want to see me when he wakes up. I'll be in the office until noon."

"I'll tell him, sir, when he wakes up."

An hour later McGraw looked up from the stack of reports on his desk as Jamison entered.

"Mr. Buell to see you, Chief."

"Show him in."

Alan Buell, still in disheveled evening clothes, entered and took the chair indicated by the chief. The latter anticipated the question on his lips before he could speak.

"Sorry, lad. We have no news of Miss Lee yet."

Alan's face fell and he sat for a moment in sorrowful silence. When at length he spoke, there was a glint in his eyes and a determined set to his jaw.

"Chief, I wonder if you would do me a special favor?"

"What favor, lad?"

"I'd like a job—and an assignment to this case."

McGraw removed his cigar from his cheek and stared at the youth in open-mouthed amazement.

"Why—er—I don't know. Most of the men on my force have done their turn in the harness before they were promoted to this work. But what about your father and your business?"

"That's all fixed up. I 'phoned Dad a few minutes ago and he told me to go to it if—if it would help to relieve my feelings. I don't care about the pay—would rather that you wouldn't pay me—but I've simply got to find Doris."

"Hum. Tell you what I'll do. I'll make you a special officer. You can consider yourself hired, and your first orders are to go home and clean up and rest up. Drop in after lunch and I'll start you off."

PROMPTLY at 1 o'clock Jamison ushered Buell into the office of the chief. McGraw looked up from a pile of reports he was scanning.

"Take a seat, lad," he said. "Send Rafferty in, Jamison."

Buell sat in silence while the chief shuffled the papers before him. Presently Rafferty came in. He was short, about five feet five inches, but powerfully built, with bulging neck muscles, broad shoulders and long, capable-looking arms. The scattered freckles on his merry Celtic countenance matched the copper hue of his hair and eyebrows. He walked with a rolling stride that suggested recent acquaintance with the deck of a ship. His age could not have been more than twenty-seven.

"Dan, this is Mr. Buell, the new man I told you about," said the chief. "Mr. Buell—Mr. Rafferty."

As the two men acknowledged the introduction, Buell noted the viselike grip of those strong fingers and reflected that Rafferty would be a mean antagonist in a rough-and-tumble.

"Jamison will sign you up and give you your badge and equipment," con-

tinued McGraw. "Rafferty has his orders and will show you the ropes from then on. Good luck to you, lads."

Some minutes later, with a badge pinned to his vest, an automatic resting snugly against his hip, and Dan Rafferty shuffling along beside him, Detective Alan Buell went to work on his first assignment. Rafferty had the curious gold ornament he had torn from the man with the pock-marked face, and a list of jewelry stores they were to visit.

"The chief says to show this to all the joolers an' try to find out where it was bought and by who," said Rafferty. "A moighty slow job he picked fer a couple av young bloods that craves excitement."

"You are fond of a fight, I take it." Buell noted the husky build of his companion.

"No more and no less than any thrue Irishman. Wrestlin' was me dish in the navy. I held the middle-weight belt av me submarine squadron whin I was discharged. Me joints are gettin' rusty wid lack of exercise on this job."

"How long have you been on the force?"

"About six months this time, though I wore the harness a couple av years before I jined the navy, and divvil a bit of fightin' have I seen." There was a look of genuine regret in his blue eyes. "If we could only meet up wid them lubbers that ran off wid yer girl, now, it wouldn't be so bad."

"It wouldn't," agreed Buell heartily.

A thorough canvass of the loop jewelry stores, taking the rest of that day and all of the next, failed to yield a single clue. Three more days spent in calling on the outlying stores and pawn-shops were fully as discouraging.

The end of the third day—a rather strenuous one—found them in that part of the city on the south side known as the "Black Belt." They had just completed a thorough interrogation of an "Uncle" who loaned money on, bought and sold everything from the gaudy gewgaws so dear to the hearts of the neighborhood gentlemen of color down to second-hand underwear, and were making their way to the corner for the purpose of boarding a downtown street-car, when a large limousine backed slowly out of a garage, blocking the sidewalk for a moment.

Buell glanced casually at the limousine as it glided out before him, then looked again with a surprized gasp of recognition, as the driver shifted his gears and whirled away. Grabbing Rafferty by the arm he pointed excitedly in the direction of the departing automobile.

"Look!" he cried. "There's the kidnaper's car!"

"The divvil!"

Rafferty whisked pad and pencil from his pocket and took down the license number.

"We'll give the chief a ring," he said. "Are yez sure that's the right bus?"

"Positive. That's a specially built body. I don't believe there's another just like it in Chicago."

"Some millynaire's private gig, eh? We'll run him down aisy, now."

They entered the garage office and obtained permission to use the telephone. Rafferty called headquarters.

"Hello, Chief. This is Dan Rafferty. Buell just spotted the kidnapers' car." He referred to his pad, then gave the license number and description. "It's cruisin' north on Wentworth Avenue now. Quiz the garage man and come right in? Yis sor. Good-bye."

He turned to the office man, a pale, slightly built fellow with furtive, shifty eyes.

"Who owns that car that just backed out av here?" he asked.

"I don't know. Wait here and I'll find out for you. The foreman hasn't turned in the ticket yet."

He went out into the garage and they saw him question a workman in greasy brown overalls.

"I don't like the look av that bird," said Rafferty. "He's got a bad eye."

"I've been thinking the same thing," replied Buell. "He was all ears when you were talking to the chief."

The office man came back presently, and they saw the workman walk toward the back of the garage.

"Foreman's down in the machine shop," he explained. "Sent a man after him. I can't leave the office, you know."

They sat down to wait. Presently the workman reappeared.

"The boss's busy grindin' some valves on a rush job," he said. "Says for you two guys to come on down if you want to talk to him."

They followed the man to the back of the garage. He opened a rickety wooden door and held it for them to pass. A dark stairway yawned before them.

"Go ahead and I'll hold my flash for you," he said. "The stair light's burnt out and we're short of globes. You'll find the boss in the front end of the machine shop."

Rafferty hesitated. Then, apparently reassured, he shrugged his shoulders and started down the stairway. Buell followed, and the workman came behind him with the light.

Suddenly, just as Rafferty reached the foot of the stairs, Buell saw a cylindrical object flash out from the darkness at the right and crash on the Irishman's skull. An instant later something struck him a terrific blow on the back of the head, strong arms seized him from behind, and he was forced to the floor, half dazed, yet struggling to shake off his assailants. The unequal contest was soon terminated. With hands and feet securely bound, a coarse gag in his mouth and a blindfold over his eyes he was half dragged, half carried for some distance, then lifted and thrown into what appeared to be a motor truck, for he heard the roar of the engine and felt the jolting of the vehicle as it whirled away.

CHAPTER 4

THE MUFFLED FIGURE

When she was dragged into the car by her two abductors, Doris Lee fought gamely, but to no purpose. Buell's leap to the running board and his subsequent battle with the pock-marked man, in which he appeared to be gaining the upper hand, brought hope of a speedy rescue. Then the man who held her swung his blackjack into play. Horrified at sight of Buell's fall from the swiftly moving car, she attempted to scream, but a heavy hand was clapped over her mouth. She bit the hand, and her captor shook her roughly.

"Easy, Spud," cautioned the man with the pock-marked face. "Remember the boss said to treat her gentle."

"You can't hold a wildcat and treat it gentle," replied the man called Spud. "She bit clean through my hand. Pull down them side curtains and let's get busy. We ain't got much time."

They were out of the loop, now, and whirling along at breakneck speed, but Doris, crowded down on the cushions between the two men, could not tell in what direction. The pock-marked ruffian pulled down the shades, then took a light, tough cord from his pocket and bound her wrists.

"Hold still, lady, and you won't get hurt," he said. "Pull at them cords and they'll cut the skin from your wrists."

"Get busy with that gag and blindfold, Pock," grunted Spud. "I ain't getting' enough jack out of this to pay me for losin' a hand."

"A bite from that little mouth ain't goin' to hurt you none. Hold her head up a little higher."

They forced a gag into her mouth, tied a white silk muffler over her eyes, and lifted her to a more comfortable position in the rocking tonneau. She pulled at the cords that held her wrists, and they cut her cruelly. The gag half choked her and the blindfold was so tight her eyes ached, but she had no way of protesting and realized that it was useless to struggle further.

After what seemed at least an hour of fast driving, every minute of which held both mental and physical torture for the girl, the car came to a sudden, shrieking stop.

The two men helped her out and she heard it speed away. Then they piloted her down a short flight of steps and paused before a door at which one of them knocked—a series of timed taps that revealed the use of a code of some sort. She heard the door open, was led forward through several more doors, and came to a stop at sound of a voice in front of her.

"Stop. You two can go no farther. Give the girl to me. It is the command of the High One."

"Where d'ya get that boloney, black boy?" It was the voice of Spud. "We ain't givin' this girl to no nigger."

She heard the voice of Pock. "It's all right, Spud. You're new at this game. The man's a eunuch and what he says is true. We can't go no farther. Ain't allowed."

"All right, you win. You been here a long time so you ought to know your onions."

Doris felt a large hand on her arm, and drew back with a shudder. The sound of retreating footsteps gradually dying in the distance told her the two men had left.

"Fear not, glorious one," said the voice beside her. "The skin of Barsar is black, but the heart is loyal and his arm is strong. He will guide and guard you safely to the blessed portals of Karneter."

He removed the gag from her mouth, which was a great relief, and she requested that her bandage be loosened. This also was done. Then she heard a humming sound like that of hidden motors and her guide led her forward a few paces. Again the motors hummed and there was a sound behind her as if a heavy door or gate had slid into place.

Once more her guide led her forward. Presently she found herself descending a stairway. And such a stairway! She thought they had traveled at least a mile down those steps when they reached a level floor once more.

Again she heard the droning hum of motors. As they progressed this humming sound recurred at regular intervals for a considerable distance. Then her guide stopped.

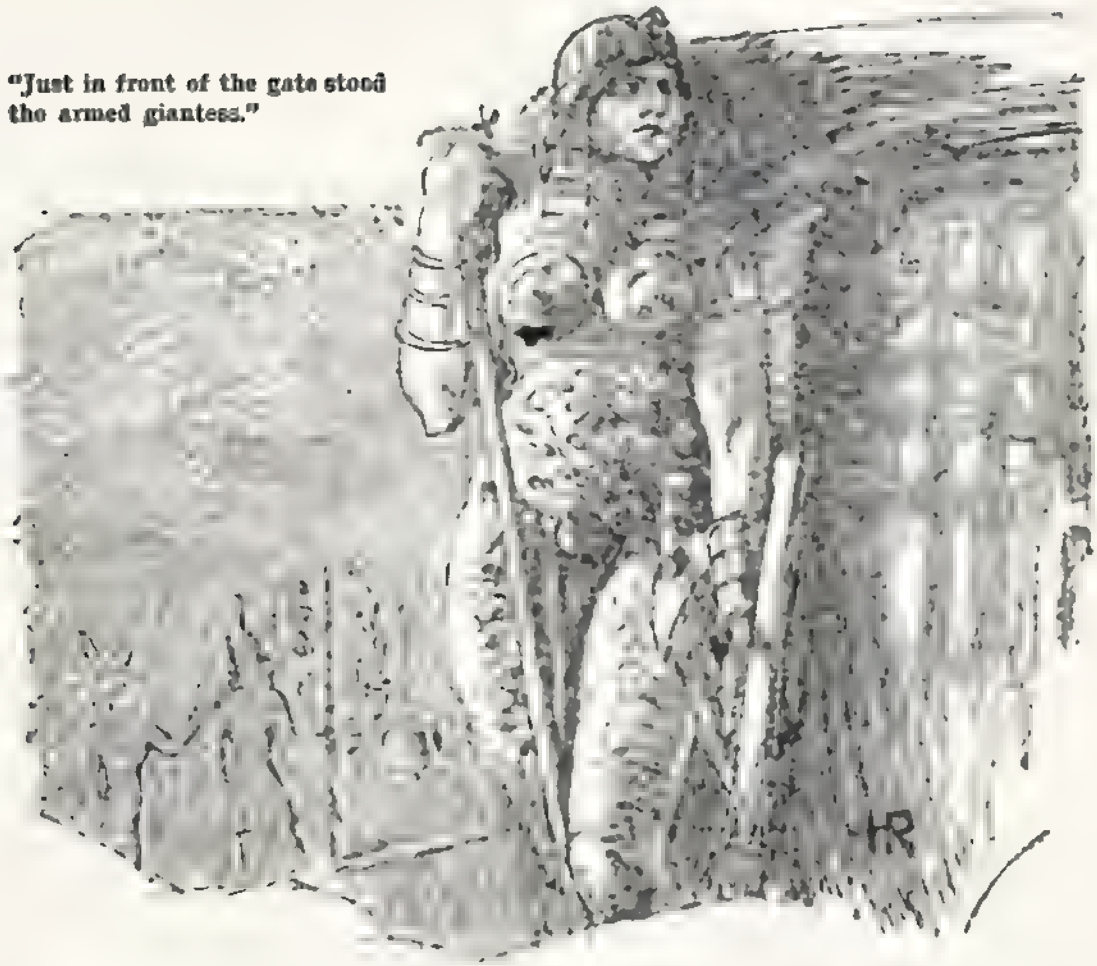
"Barsar can go no farther," he said. "From this point others will guide you."

Another came, a woman this time, to judge from the sound of her voice.

"Come, glorious one," she said, placing her hand on Doris' arm. "Let Thansor guide you through the portals of Karneter, the blessed."

The motors hummed once more. Then they walked forward and descended a flight of steps. At the bottom the guide helped Doris into what was evidently a vehicle of some sort, for it contained a cushioned seat and moved away noiselessly, swaying slightly from side to side.

For twenty minutes she rode in the soundless, swinging vehicle. When at length her guide helped her out, they climbed a flight of broad, stone steps, and entered a room which,



"Just in front of the gate stood the armed giantess."

judging from the echoes of their footsteps on the hard floor and the time it took to cross it, was quite large. There was a pungent fragrance in the air that reminded her of incense.

Passing into what was evidently a carpeted hallway, she was led for some distance farther, then a door was thrown open and she was piloted through it. It closed with a metallic clang.

"Sisa! Tirabel!" her guide called. "The glorious one has come. Attend her promptly, for the Lord of Karneter will soon be here."

The door opened and Doris heard the departing footsteps of her guide. Gentle hands on each side of her led her to a cushioned seat. Deftly, swiftly, the hands removed her bonds and blindfold. When she opened her eyes she saw that she was attended by two girls attired in garments of strange design—clinging, translucent fabric of light blue trimmed with gold. Their bare feet were shod with sandals of light blue leather. Both girls were quite pretty, each in her own way. The girl who had just removed her blindfold stood beside her. She was tall and willowy, with an olive complexion and glossy, jet-black hair. The other, the one who had removed her bonds, knelt before her, gently rubbing her wrists. She was smaller, more inclined to plumpness, and had a pink and white complexion

and fluffy auburn hair. She was the first to speak.

"I am Tirabel, glorious one," she said. "Sisa and I have been sent here to minister to your wants. You must be tired after your journey to Karneter. Sisa will prepare a refreshing bath while I help you with your clothing."

WHILE she was being made ready for the bath, Doris had time for a detailed observation of her surroundings. She occupied a suite consisting of three rooms and bath. It was furnished lavishly, gorgeously, the predominating colors being blue and gold. Hangings were of blue velvet fringed with gold and decorated near the top with an irregular sprinkling of silver stars worked into the fabric. The lacquered furniture was grotesquely carved, representing lions, leopards, human-headed animals, and queer monstrosities that could scarcely be said to resemble either humans or animals.

After a luxurious scented bath in a sunken marble tub, and a brisk rubdown at the hands of Sisa, Doris was arrayed in light blue clothing and sandals similar to the costumes of the two girls but more richly ornamented. Then Tirabel bound her fluffy golden hair with a band of blue velvet which supported a glittering silver star above her forehead.

The two girls surveyed their handiwork with open admiration.

"Is she not lovely, Sisa?" murmured Tirabel.

"Almost too lovely to be real," replied Sisa. "Our mighty lord would not have chosen her, otherwise. It must be that she is the most beautiful woman in the upper and lower worlds."

Suddenly a loud knocking sounded at the door. Sisa opened it, and was confronted by a gigantic woman who wore metal breastplates and wristlets and a cuirass of chain mail. A huge simitar was belted to her waist and she carried a long spear. The light glinted from her burnished helmet as she stooped to pass through the doorway. She was as generously proportioned in width as in stature and the muscles of her bare arms stood out like those of a trained athlete. Grounding her spear, she looked down at Sisa and said in a deep, almost masculine voice:

"News comes that the High One has arrived. Is all in readiness?"

"All is ready," replied Sisa.

"Then depart, that the glorious one may receive her lord alone."

Bowing low before Doris, Sisa and Tirabel took their departure. The giantess backed out after them and Doris noticed an iron-barred gate standing ajar just beyond it. When the door was closed once more she heard the clang of the gate as it swung into place.

She pondered the words of the giantess: "That she may receive her lord alone." Someone, a man, a ruler of some sort, was coming to her rooms. Evidently she had been abducted by his order. Why? For what purpose? She shuddered as she thought of the possibilities.

Rushing to the nearest window, she drew back the blue silk curtains and looked out. It was barred with heavy rods of steel. Beyond, she saw what looked like a tropical garden, bathed in moonlight. She ran to the next window, then the two remaining ones. All were similarly barred. There remained only the door. Hurrying across the room, she opened it softly. The gate was in place, fastened with a huge padlock. Just in front of the gate stood the armed giantess. She shut the door without heed to the noise it might make, made a last, hopeless circuit of the rooms, and returning, sank down on a blue and gold couch in utter despair.

Tears came presently, and she buried her wet face among the soft

cushions, weeping helplessly—hopelessly. Minutes passed—more than thirty of them—and with them the flood of her tears. Complete exhaustion claimed her and she lay back languidly, only keeping her eyes open and her faculties alert by a supreme effort of will.

The minutes dragged on in dreary procession. She was nearly asleep when suddenly she heard the grating of a key and the creak of the metal gate. Then the door opened softly and a tall figure, muffled from head to foot in a dark blue cloak, stepped into the room.

Too paralyzed with fear to so much as lift a hand, Doris gazed at the cloaked figure in wide-eyed horror. Above the folds of the cloak which concealed the lower part of the face, she saw a pair of eyes—glittering, cruel, hawklike — regarding her steadily. Heavy black eyebrows that met in a straight line above the nose added to the fierceness of their expression.

She caught her breath sharply, then screamed in mortal terror, as the figure came swiftly toward her!

CHAPTER 5

A STRANGE ROOMING HOUSE

BUMPING about in the rattling, roaring motor truck, Buell's body soon became a mass of aches and bruises. His head throbbed terrifically from the blow he had received in the garage and the gag all but strangled him.

After what seemed an age of relentless jolting, the vehicle came to a stop. He was dragged out, swung to the shoulders of three men and carried up a short flight of steps. A door opened, and then several more as they progressed, and he was taken up what was evidently a winding stairway, the steps of which creaked when trod upon. Two more stairways were mounted, then he was carried a few steps farther and a door opened. His captors lowered him to the floor. Then they left him without a word. He heard them close and lock the door and walk away, their footsteps dying in the distance.

Buell's hands were bound in front of him, and he was testing the strength of his bonds when a loud, blood-curdling groan suddenly shattered the comparative stillness. He lifted his hands and dragged the gag from his mouth. Then he pushed back the blindfold, yet all was black around him.

A series of grunts in the direction from which the groan had come was followed by a string of forceful and picturesque Celtic invective.

"Rafferty," he called, "is that you?"

"Heaven be praised, yer alive then, Buell," came the response. "I thought maybe the dirty divvils had kilt you."

"Not yet. They put a goose egg on my head and trussed me up like a fowl on a spit."

"Goose egg, is it? The bump on me head feels as big as wan av thim dinnysaur eggs. Sure, I'd give me month's pay for wan good poke at the lubber that hit me."

"That makes it unanimous," agreed Buell, raising his bound hands to his throbbing head.

"Wonder what they're—hullo!" Rafferty paused to listen. "It's company we seem to be gettin'."

The sound of approaching footsteps grew momentarily louder. They paused near at hand. Then came the murmur of gruff voices, the jingle of keys, and the grating click of a lock. Buell was momentarily blinded by a flood of yellow light as someone pressed a switch.

A man grasped him roughly by the arm and jerked him to a sitting posture. He blinked and looked into the leering eyes of the man with the pock-marked face. Standing near by

was a second ruffian, holding a tray of food and steaming black coffee.

"Set the chow down beside 'em, Bill," said the pock-marked one. "They slipped their gags and blindfolds so I guess they kin eat all right with their mitts tied."

"I'll dare yez to untie mine, the both of yez," growled Dan Rafferty.

"Shut yer face before I kick it in fer you," politely responded the one called Bill.

"It's a couple av cowardly gutter-rats yez are," replied Rafferty, undaunted.

Buell saw the fellow's face redden with anger. He put the tray on the floor and advanced threateningly, then drew back a heavy shod foot for a kick. Buell swung his bound legs just in time to trip the ruffian, who fell, sprawling and cursing, into the tray of food. Then the pock-marked man struck him a heavy blow in the face that sent him back to the floor. A free-for-all scrimmage followed. Rafferty had rolled to the assistance of Buell, only to be set upon by the cursing, food-smeared bruiser. The pock-marked man rained furious blows on Buell's unprotected face and body. He managed to roll out of reach for a moment, but the fellow plunged after him with an angry roar. The moment's respite had given Buell an opportunity to draw back his bound feet, and he now planted them in the pit of the man's stomach as he bent over. The force of that kick sent him clear to the opposite wall, where he fell, doubled up like a jackknife, the wind completely knocked from his body.

Turning, Buell saw Rafferty suddenly slide his bound wrists over the head and shoulders of his assailant, pinning his arms to his sides in such a manner as to make it impossible for him to strike an effective blow.

"Atta boy, Dan!" he cried. "Hold him." Then he rose and hopped to the assistance of his companion.

"Hold him, is it?" replied Rafferty, tightening his gorillalike arms until his captive groaned with pain. "Sure I'll crack ivvery bone in his body if he makes wan move or lets out a peep. See if the cowardly spalpeen has a knife."

Buell searched rapidly with his bound hands. From one hip-pocket he extracted a blackjack—from the other, a wicked-looking case-knife. Then he promptly used the former on the ruffian, the latter on his comrade's bonds.

"I'll just cut the knots," he said, "and unwind the rest. We'll need these ropes."

They worked so swiftly that in five minutes they had both men bound and gagged. The pockets of the one with the pock-marked face had yielded weapons similar to those of his companion, so both detectives were now armed.

"A foine-lookin' pair of cut-throats," said Rafferty. "I'd like to see thim whin they come to, but I guess we'd best be lavin'."

Buell opened the door stealthily and looked out. He saw a long, dimly lighted hallway.

"Come on," he said. "Now's our chance."

They switched off the room light and locked the door.

"We'll search the house," he continued. "Doris may be a prisoner here."

"Lead on, me bye," replied Rafferty with enthusiasm. "Another iligant little scrap like that will take the rust out av me joints."

A SEARCH of the entire floor they were on proved fruitless. Every room was not only deserted, but bare of furniture as well. All windows were boarded up with heavy planking, spiked to the frames. They found a broad, banistered stairway at one end of the hall and a small, spiral stairway at the other.

"Must have been a rooming house at one time," said Buell. "This is evidently the top floor, as the stairways end here. Let's try the next one."

They noiselessly descended the smaller stairway, stopped at the next landing and opened the door that led to the hallway. The odor of tobacco smoke and the sound of voices greeted them. These apparently issued from an open transom at their left.

"Wait here," whispered Buell, "and I'll take a peek through the keyhole."

He tiptoed softly to the door and looked through the narrow opening. Four men, a hard-looking lot, were seated at a table playing poker. There were glasses all around, and two half-emptied whisky bottles. The man opposite the door, a burly, bottle-nosed ruffian with a tattered cigar gripped between his teeth, tossed a chip to the center of the table.

"Open for a dollar," he said.

"Stay," said the next man.

The others threw in their hands.

"Only one customer?" The burly one looked disgusted. "This game is goin' flat. Wonder what's keepin' Pock and Bill."

"Dey went up to feed dem two amachoor dicks," replied the man across from him.

"Seems like they're takin' a hell of a long time to it. By the way, what's the boss gonna do with them two?"

"Croak 'em, I guess, if de chief dick don't come across. Dey framed Verkler dis afternoon. 'Phoned in de number of his bus and he got pinched. Sproul wrote McGraw a note and offered to trade him, two men for one."

"Ain't Sproul gettin' awful generous?"

"Not him. He got his orders from de big boss."

Buell rose and beckoned to Rafferty. The Irishman, bursting with curiosity, joined him.

"What the divvil's goin' on in there?" he whispered.

"Poker game. Now is a good time to search this floor."

Lights shone through the transoms above three other doors. All the rest were dark. They investigated the lighted rooms first. Two proved to be bathrooms. In the third, they saw a man seated on the edge of a bed taking off his shoes. Four of the dark rooms proved to be unoccupied bedrooms. A fifth was bolted on the inside. A sleepy growl came from within as Buell turned the knob.

"Whadda ya want?"

"Pardon me. Got the wrong door," replied Buell.

"Why doncha look where you're goin'?" was the polite rejoinder. "Wakin' a guy up at this hour of the night."

Rafferty grinned.

"Sure and that was a close call," he said. "Yez got away wid it good, though."

Buell tried the last door in a more gingerly manner. He found an empty bedroom.

Again they descended the spiral stairway. This time they found three doors at the bottom. One was outlined with yellow light. From beyond it came a metallic clatter and an odor suggestive of cookery.

"The galley—I mane the kitchen," said Rafferty.

He bent to look through the keyhole, but there was none. Then he found it was a swinging door. By pushing it open a little way he gained a view within. He let it carefully back into place, then rose.

"Couple av slant-eyed Chinks polishin' pots and pans," he whispered.

In the meantime Buell had tried the two other doors. One opened to a basement stairway—the other to a butler's pantry.

"Might as well explore this floor while we're here," he said. "Come on."

Beyond the pantry was a spacious dining room, elegantly furnished. From another room still farther on, light filtered through the portieres that spanned the double opening.

As they neared the portieres a bell tinkled in the room beyond. It rang again, long and insistently. Looking between the portieres, Buell saw a large living room, comfortably and tastily furnished. It was lighted by a single, shaded floor lamp. At the far end a servant in livery was opening the door. He admitted a man whose beaver hat and fur-collared topcoat were powdered with snow.

"Is Sproul in?" he asked, as the man relieved him of topcoat and hat.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Sproul is expecting you, I believe, sir."

The servant strode pompously to a curtained doorway at the right. As he drew back the hangings a shaft of light flashed into the living room.

"Mr. Melvin to see you, sir," he announced.

"Vell, show him in," came a querulous, high-pitched voice from the other side.

The visitor entered. As the light struck full on his face, Buell recognized the man who had blackjacked him in the limousine on the night of Doris' abduction.

"Runnels." It was the querulous voice again.

"Yes, sir."

"Go into the entryway and close the inner door. I vant to speak privately mit dis gentleman."

"Yes, sir. Very good, sir."

Buell waited until the servant had shut himself in the vestibule.

"Let's go," he whispered.

They tiptoed stealthily to the curtained doorway and peered within. Two men sat facing each other across a massive walnut table. One was the visitor. Buell gave a start of surprize as he saw the half-turned profile of the other. It called up a vision of a café—two men seated at a table edging the dance floor. One wore a square-cut beard and smoked long, Oriental cigarettes. The other, middle-aged and portly, toyed with a highball glass, even as he now toyed with a small golden inkwell. Buell saw the connection now. Sproul was the agent of the black-bearded man and this other, the man called Melvin, was a minion of Sproul.

CHAPTER 6

THE FATE OF A RENEGADE

"VELL, Melvin, haff you decided to stick mit us?" Sproul pushed the inkwell from him and folded his pudgy fingers.

"Stick, hell! I told you what I'd do last night. I'm through. I agreed to help you pull this job—you and Pock. Pulled it slick, didn't we? Gimme my jack and we'll part friends. You don't need to come this 'Stick with the gang' stuff on me. I'm no squealer. You know that."

"It ain't that you're a squealer." Sproul plucked at his watch-chain and drew a small emblem from his vest pocket—an emblem similar to that which Buell had torn from the man with the pock-marked face. The burnished disk glittered in the light as he held it aloft. "Ven you got vun of dese you swore a certain oath. Are you going to keep it?"

"Certainly I'm going to keep it. I've done my part. All I want is a square deal. You know the penalty for kidnaping. Even if I wanted to squawk do you think I'd be damned fool enough to put my own head in the noose?"

Sproul leaned back heavily, replacing the charm in his pocket.

"That ain't the point, Melvin. Mit us the law of nature holds. All life is progress. You can't stand still—

you can't go back. To do so is death."

Melvin half rose in his chair, his lips drawn back from flashing teeth.

"You dare to threaten me?" he snarled. He did not see what Buell and Rafferty saw—a pudgy thumb pushing a button on the table leg. "Do you mean to say you've got the brass to sit there and threaten Spud Melvin, champion gunman of the toughest ward in Chicago?"

Sproul raised a deprecatory hand.

"Now, now! Vait a minute. Sit down. Did I say *I* vos threatening you?"

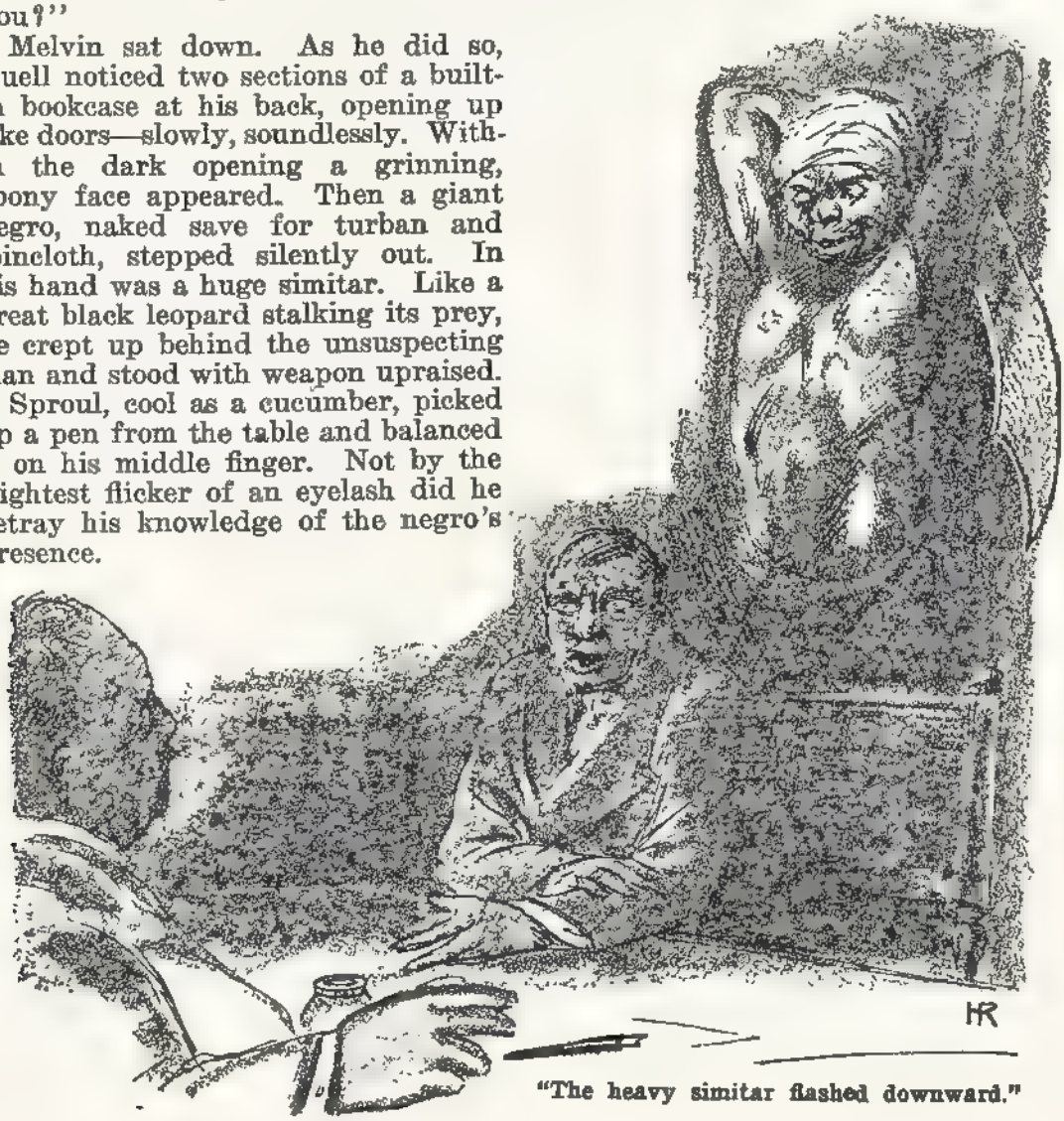
Melvin sat down. As he did so, Buell noticed two sections of a built-in bookcase at his back, opening up like doors—slowly, soundlessly. Within the dark opening a grinning, ebony face appeared. Then a giant negro, naked save for turban and loincloth, stepped silently out. In his hand was a huge simitar. Like a great black leopard stalking its prey, he crept up behind the unsuspecting man and stood with weapon upraised.

Sproul, cool as a cucumber, picked up a pen from the table and balanced it on his middle finger. Not by the slightest flicker of an eyelash did he betray his knowledge of the negro's presence.

"Melvin," he said. "*I* don't threaten you. A power greater than either of us—greater than I can tell you, threatens. As the humble mouthpiece of that power I giff you this last chance. Are you mit us?"

Melvin leaned forward, tensely alert.

"Sproul," he replied, "*I* recognize no power on earth except the power of Spud Melvin to fight his way through. I'm giving *you* this last chance to play square with me. Either come through with my dough



"The heavy simitar flashed downward."

or beat me to the draw. You always carry a gun and you know my speed. What'll you have?"

Sproul twirled the pen between thumb and forefinger with an air of unconcern.

"I haff said my say. I'm through."

"Then so am I," rasped Melvin. "See, here's my hand above the table. I'm giving you a chance."

Sproul dropped the pen. The heavy simitar flashed downward, shearing Melvin's skull to the bridge of the nose. He slumped forward without a sound.

"Take him out, Barsar," cried Sproul. His voice was again high-pitched and querulous. "Don't pull the blade out until you get him off the rug. I don't vant blood all over it."

In a moment the negro had disappeared in the opening with the body of Melvin. The bookcases slid back in place as slowly and noiselessly as before.

Sproul coolly selected a cigar from a lacquered humidor on the table, lighted it, and puffed reflectively. Suddenly he cocked his head to one side in a listening attitude. At the same moment Buell and Rafferty heard the clatter of heavy shoes. Someone was running toward them from the back of the house.

"Quick," said Rafferty. "Duck behind this sofy."

A large, overstuffed davenport slanted across the corner of the room nearest them. They barely had time to leap behind its broad back when a man dashed past and entered the library.

"The dicks is gone!" he gasped. "Tied up Pock and Bill and locked 'em in the room."

Buell recognized the voice of the bottle-nosed man.

"*Himmel!* They must be in the house yet. Haff you searched?"

"The boys are lookin' around now."

"Look eferywhere. Look in the basement—on the roof. They couldn't pass the guards. *Mein Gott!* It will mean our heads if they are gone! Go! Hurry! Don't stand there like a *verdammte esel! Ach!* I must tell the High One."

Again the fellow hurried past the davenport. They heard a door slam in the rear, and the muffled clatter of shoes on the stairs.

Buell poked his head above the davenport, then lowered it hurriedly. The butler was coming toward the library.

"Did you call me, sir?" he asked.

"Call you? No. Go back to the vestibule, lock the doors on both sides of you and have your veapons ready. The detectifs are loose."

"Yes, sir. Right away, sir."

As soon as the butler closed the door, Buell and Rafferty emerged from hiding and approached the library. Looking between the curtains, Buell saw the two bookcase sections slowly swinging into place. Sproul was not in sight.

"He's gone," cried Buell, "through that hole in the wall. Come on."

They dashed into the library just as the sections settled into position. Buell pressed the button on the table leg and they swung slowly forward once more. An inspection of the dark opening revealed a small landing and a narrow stairway, descending steeply in front of them.

They stepped within. Voices came from the direction of the dining room.

"How're we gonna shut this thing?" inquired Rafferty. "Them roughnecks are comin' from upstairs."

Buell, looking around hastily, noted a small button on the ceiling, similar to that on the table leg. He pressed it, saw that the doors were closing, and led the way down the narrow stairs.

CHAPTER 7

WALLS WITH EARS—AND VOICES

THE two detectives, expecting to arrive in the basement with a comparatively few steps, were surprized to find that the stairway led on and on as if headed for the very center of the earth.

"Mebby this is the way them two Chink cooks came up," said Rafferty. "A couple av miles more and we'll be in their counthry."

"Can the comedy," advised Buell, who was a few steps in the lead. "I see a light ahead of us."

A hundred feet more and they were under the light, standing on a small, square landing. Facing them on three sides were stone walls. The floor and ceiling were of solid concrete. Their way was blocked in every direction except that from which they had come.

Rafferty, always inquisitive, tapped on the wall with his knuckles.

"Now what the——?"

He was interrupted by a voice, the deep, sepulchral tones of which sent cold chills racing up and down his spine and rendered him momentarily speechless. It echoed through the small enclosure without seeming to come from any particular part of it.

"What seek ye here?"

Buell was rendered as tongue-tied as his garrulous companion for a moment. Then a happy thought struck him.

"We have a message for the High One," he said.

There was a sound like the whir of a powerful motor, and the wall in front of them slid swiftly upward, revealing a dimly-lighted passageway beyond, but no sign of a human being.

"Proceed," said the mysterious voice.

Buell went ahead with inward misgivings but no outward sign of trepidation. Rafferty, close behind, seemed actually to be enjoying himself. He looked back as the wall dropped into place once more.

"Begorry, this is gettin' interestin'," he said. "Sure I've often heard that walls had ears, but I nivver even dreamt that they had voices."

Some distance farther on they reached another blank wall. They were interrogated in the same manner, gave the same answer, and were allowed to proceed as before.

They had passed a third, a fourth and finally a fifth wall when Rafferty began to show signs of misgiving.

"Mark me words there's somethin' spoiled in Copenhagen," he said.

"It's beginning to look that way," replied Buell.

"Sure, it's all too aisy to be true. I'm beginning to think this place is a damned sight aisier to get into than out of."

They reached a sixth wall presently, and were interrogated as at the previous ones.

"What seek ye here?"

A peculiarity that Buell had noticed was that the voice at each wall not only repeated the same words as at the first one, but spoke in exactly the same tones, as if one man were conducting all the questioning.

"We bear a message to the High One," replied Buell, waiting for the wall to rise. He heard the whir of hidden motors, but the wall remained where it was. What could be happening? he wondered. He turned and saw that another wall had been lowered close behind them. They were hemmed in a narrow boxlike space.

Both men looked around apprehensively. There was no sign of a person or even an opening in any direction.

The stillness was suddenly shattered by a horrible shriek of demoniac

laughter, which echoed and re-echoed from the walls of their prison.

"Laugh, you blisterin' hyena," shouted Rafferty. "Remimber he who laughs last gets the most fun out av it."

A horrid cackle answered him.

At the same moment Buell became conscious of a peculiar acrid odor permeating the enclosure and growing stronger every minute. With the coming of this odor it seemed that the room was beginning to rock gently to and fro as if it were swinging on the end of a long rope. Noting that the light was growing dim, he looked upward toward the small incandescent globe. A cloud of thick yellow vapor had partly obscured it.

"Fire!" he shouted. "The room is on fire!"

He could not hear the sound of his own voice. Instead he saw with horror that flaming letters were issuing from his mouth, spelling out the words and disappearing with puffs of yellow smoke.

The room was beginning to rock with more and more violence. In attempting to steady himself he collided with Dan Rafferty, who was similarly employed.

"Steady, me lad." The flaming words issued this time from the mouth of Dan Rafferty, visible but not audible.

With a supreme effort, Buell pulled himself erect. Suddenly he felt himself growing very rapidly. He was as tall as the Woolworth Building. Far below him Rafferty, looking no bigger than an ant, was holding out both hands and endeavoring to balance himself as if walking a tightrope. He felt himself growing smaller once more. Down, down he shot, with a swiftness that was appalling. The wind whistled past his ears and a sinking feeling similar to that experienced by some people in rapidly descending elevators attacked the pit of his stomach.

The next instant Dan Rafferty assumed gigantic proportions and Buell felt as small as an insect. The room began whirling, slowly at first, but gradually gaining momentum until an appalling speed had been attained. He kept to his feet with difficulty that increased as the whirling grew swifter. At length, reaching the limit of his endurance, he fell to the floor. A shower of multicolored sparks dropped around him. Then all went black. . . .

When Doris Lee cried out in terror, the muffled figure approaching her couch stopped. Then a voice issued from the cloak.

"Come, Thansor, attend the girl. She seems hysterical."

A pudgy female, attired in a stiff blue robe trimmed with silver, came through the door. She threw back her cowl as she entered, revealing a shaven head and a round, moonlike face, the fat, puffy cheeks of which almost hid her tiny pig eyes.

She approached the couch and placed a moist, plump hand on Doris' brow.

"Be not afraid, glorious one," she said. "I am Thansor, who piloted you through the gates."

The muffled figure spoke once more.

"Give her the best of care, Thansor. I will go, now, and return when she is in a calmer mood."

Thansor made deep obeisance as the figure departed. When the door had closed and the gate clanged shut behind it, she turned once more to Doris.

"It was a mistake for you to receive our mighty lord in this fashion," she said. "You had naught to fear, for he merely wished to make sure you were the right girl."

Still trembling from the shock of her terrifying experience, Doris looked up into the little piglike eyes.

"The right girl for what?"

"There, there. We shall not talk of it tonight. You have been chosen, among all the beautiful women of the earth, for the greatest honor that can come to any woman. Tomorrow you shall know. Tomorrow, when you have rested and grown stronger, I shall instruct and prepare you. Let me help you to bed now."

The appearance of the bed to which the woman led her was not exactly conducive to peaceful slumber. It was supported by two lean, fierce-looking hunting leopards, carved from hard wood and lacquered orange and black.

When, however, she had donned her sleeping garment and crept beneath the covers, she found it more downy and comfortable than she ever imagined a bed could be.

For a long time—it seemed several hours—she lay there tossing restlessly, the pudgy, blue-robed figure at her bedside, but outraged nature finally asserted itself and sleep claimed her.

CHAPTER 8

THE HALL OF THE TWO TRUTHS

THE first thing that smote Alan Buell's returning consciousness was a feeling of nausea and an intense thirst. He craved cold, clear water—buckets of it, barrels of it, whole rivers and lakes of it. His tongue was swollen and furry, his lips were parched and hot, and he discovered, as he sat up to look about him, that every muscle in his body was the seat of a separate, distinct, and intensely painful ache. Another discovery was even more of a shock. On leaning forward to arise he was brought up with a jerk by a stout chain attached to a heavy metal collar that circled his neck. The other end was fastened to a ring in the rough stone wall behind him. Similarly fettered, Dan Rafferty was lying near by, snoring lustily.

The room was of stone—floor, walls and ceiling. A grated steel door admitted light from what was evidently a corridor without.

A heavy, measured tread sounded in the corridor. Presently a man passed the door. Buell gasped in amazement when he saw that the man was not only a giant, nearly seven feet in height, but that he wore the uniform of a soldier of ancient Egypt. In his right hand he carried a long, heavy spear. A sharply curved simitar dangled from the left side of his belt.

Dan Rafferty, awakened by the clatter, sat up and clasped his head in his hands.

"Oh, what a headache!" he groaned. "They've chained us up like a couple av dogs, too, the blitherin' swabs."

"What do you suppose they doped us with?" asked Buell. "It was like a mixture of white lightning, quinine and T. N. T."

"Acts like some dope I wance got in a joint in Port Said," replied Rafferty. "It was me buddy, Tim Rourke, got me to go into the place. The effect was the same, only we ate the stuff instid of inhalin' it. 'Hashish' is what them Naygurs called it."

"It gives you a queer bunch of hallucinations."

"An' a hell av a mornin' after. Sure, I feel as if a herd av wild elephants had been playin' follie-the-leader on me frame."

Fully an hour elapsed before anyone entered their cell. Then a negro, clad in a turban, loin-cloth and sandals, brought them food on a tray. He was admitted by the giant guard, who stood with spear held in readiness for a thrust while the food was placed on the floor. It consisted of some round, hard biscuits, dried dates, and a cup of water apiece.

Buell's stomach rebelled at the sight of food, but he drank the water eagerly. Rafferty, whose gastronomic ability seemed unimpaired, munched his biscuits and dates and sipped his water sparingly.

"A foine layout of chow they hand you in this callyboose," he remarked. "It wouldn't kape a guinea-pig alive, much less a human."

"Take mine, too, if you want it," said Buell. "I can't even bear to look at it."

"It's lucky I am with a seaman's stomach," replied Rafferty, "that is, providin' I can manage to get it dacently filled now and then."

He consumed the second plate of food and, apparently much refreshed, amused himself by trying his strength on the staple to which his chain was fastened, at odd moments when the tall guard was out of hearing.

Buell, more sick than ever from having drunk the water, tried to get some sleep. He was just falling into a doze when the lock clicked and the cell door was flung wide. Four men, each over seven feet tall, and dressed and armed like their guard, entered. They were followed by another, armed only with a simitar, who seemed to be in command. He ordered both detectives handcuffed—then took a bunch of keys from his girdle and unlocked the metal collars that held them. Each man was then led away between two guards.

They were hustled through a maze of arched, dimly lit corridors, and halted at length in what appeared to be a rather large anteroom. Three other prisoners, guarded and handcuffed like themselves, were lined up before a closed door. Two were dressed in ancient Egyptian costumes. The third wore the clothing of modern civilization.

After a wait of perhaps fifteen minutes two raps sounded at the door. A guard, opening it a little way, held whispered conversation with someone on the other side, then holding one hand aloft, he announced:

"It is the command of the mighty Osiris, Son of the Setting Sun and Lord of the Nether World, that these wandering souls be brought before him in the Hall of the Two Truths, where his righteous judgment will be passed on them."

He swung the door wide, all lights were extinguished, and the prisoners were led forward in utter darkness. Buell, the last in line, heard the door close after him. A moment later his guards brought him to a halt and he heard the butts of their spears as they grounded them on the stone floor.

Straining his eyes in the inky blackness, Buell at length beheld a tiny phosphorescent pinpoint of light a considerable distance ahead of him. It was round at first, but as it grew he noted that it spread more rapidly from side to side than from top to bottom, until it took on the shape and semblance of a flashing human eye a foot and a half in width. Beneath the eye another point of light glowed and grew momentarily larger. Gradually, eerily, a white-clad human form was revealed, seated on a massive, jewel-encrusted throne. On the head was a dazzling white crown adorned with plumes and horns and fronted with a burnished golden disk. In the hands, held crossed against the breast, were a shepherd's crook and a three-lashed whip. What attracted his attention the most, however, was the face—impassive, yet conveying the impression of concealed craft and cruelty. The eyebrows were heavy, overshadowing the glittering black eyes, and met in a straight line above the aquiline nose. Jaws and lips were clean-shaven except at the point of the chin, from which a long, narrow, tightly waxed beard curved downward and outward like the inverted blade of a sickle.

Something about the face—the expression—seemed strangely familiar. Buell racked his brain in an effort to recall where he had seen it before. Then his attention was attracted by a new demonstration. A beam of bright light shot suddenly from the pupil of the huge eye, making a brilliant white circle on the floor before the throne. Into the circle stepped a weird figure with a hideous jackal mask, and bowed low before the white-crowned ruler, who asked:

"What would you, Anubis?"

"The prisoners are ready to be judged, mighty Osiris."

"Then bring them forward, one at a time."

The jackal-masked Anubis advanced on the prisoners, followed by the circle of light. Roughly seizing the first man—the one who was dressed in the raiment of modern civilization—he dragged him before the throne and forced him to his knees.

The circle of light widened and two more masked figures stepped forward. The head of one was covered by a hood, fronted with the head and neck of an ibis. The other wore a hawk-mask before his face and a similar hood over head and neck. The man with the hawk-mask stepped up beside the prisoner.

"Mighty Osiris," he said, "I present Ammut, who was called Samuel Whitford the banker in the upper world. I charge him with having attacked his conductors with the intent to do them bodily injury while they were guiding him, at his own behest, into the blessed realm of Karneter."

The ibis-masked figure, holding a strip of papyrus before him, wrote rapidly thereon as if making a record of the name and charges.

"Have you aught to say for yourself, Ammut?" The man on the throne transfixed the cowering prisoner with a stern glance.

"They put a hood over my head and I objected," he replied. "Then they beat me and put manacles on my hands. Was it for treatment such as this that I paid you a hundred thousand dollars? Is this the fate of those who give up their all to follow the teachings of Mezzar Hashin?"

The figure on the throne scowled darkly down at him.

"For you, Mezzar Hashin has ceased to exist," he said. "His temple is in the upper world. You are now in the realm of Osiris, Lord of Karneter. Had you been tractable when conducted hither you would have been given the post of high authority promised you. As it is, you must be punished."

He turned to the ibis-masked figure.

"Thoth, you will record for Ammut a year at the hand-pumps. At the end of that period he will again be brought before us. We have spoken."

With the short crook in his right hand he struck a gong beside the throne. Then, from out the darkness at the right, came the sound of deep-throated roars, screeches and growls. Two crouching figures, hideously masked and costumed, bounded into the circle of light. Their heads were covered with grinning crocodile masks. Necks and shoulders were encased in shaggy lion's manes, and arms and body down to the waist in the skins of the same beast. Below the waist appeared the rounded rumps, stubby tails, and clubbed feet of hippopotami. Roaring lustily, they seized the hapless prisoner and hurried him away into the darkness at the left.

The next prisoner was brought before the throne in the same manner by Anubis.

"Whom have we here, Horus?"

The hawk-masked Horus replied:

"Punjad, whom I accuse of stealing a bottle of wine from the cellars of the temple."

"What have you to say for yourself, knave?" thundered the Lord of Karneter.

The miserable man prostrated himself before the throne, admitted his guilt, and begged for mercy.

"Give him forty lashes!"

This time three of the grotesque roaring figures bounded into the light. Two of them removed the prisoner's upper garment and hurled him to the floor. The third, who carried a heavy whip with three lashes, cut viciously into the bared back of the writhing, shrieking victim again and again, while Thoth counted and recorded the strokes. The shrieks died down to low moans before the thirtieth stroke, and ceased before the thirty-fifth as the man swooned, but the whip cut mercilessly on at the mangled, bleeding back until the sentence was completed. Then the limp body was dragged out into the darkness at the left.

Anubis conducted the third prisoner before the throne.

Again Horus stepped into the circle of light.

"Mighty Osiris," he said. "I present Jethlo, guard of the most holy Temple of Re. I charge him with profaning the sanctuary by improper advances to the vestal virgin, Delra."

The Lord of Karneter glared down at the prisoner.

"Do you deny this, wretch?" he roared.

The accused man did not grovel like the one who had gone before him.

"I did but present her with a bauble—a locket which she greatly admired," he replied.

"So! You have betrayed a trust and profaned the sanctuary of our Father by casting covetous eyes on a holy virgin."

He struck the gong and two of the hideously masked creatures again bounded into the circle of light.

"My faithful Am-mits, you will take this vile wretch to Sebek, who will convey him to that inner Karneter whence no man returneth."

The circle of light moved backward from the throne, following the steps of the prisoner and his two weird conductors. Though he evidently knew what was coming, he did not flinch or falter, but walked forward with head erect and lips set grimly.

Presently the light flashed back from tall brass bars surrounding a circular pool of water about twenty-five feet in diameter. As the three men paused before a barred gate, Buell noticed the phosphorescent gleam of a pair of eyes and the glint of a wet snout in the water. One of the conductors opened the gate, the other pushed the prisoner within, and it was shut with a clang. There followed a sudden rush through the rippling water. Then the yawning, tooth-filled jaws of Sebek, the sacred crocodile, opened and snapped at their victim. He leaped back and ran around the edge of the pool, only to be felled by a blow from the powerful tail.

A moment later a few bloody bubbles marked the spot where he had been dragged beneath the water.

Again the circle of light swung back before the throne and rested on the solitary figure of the jackal-headed Anubis.

"How many prisoners remain?" asked the Lord of Karneter.

"There are but two, mighty Osiris. Those who were detectives in the upper world."

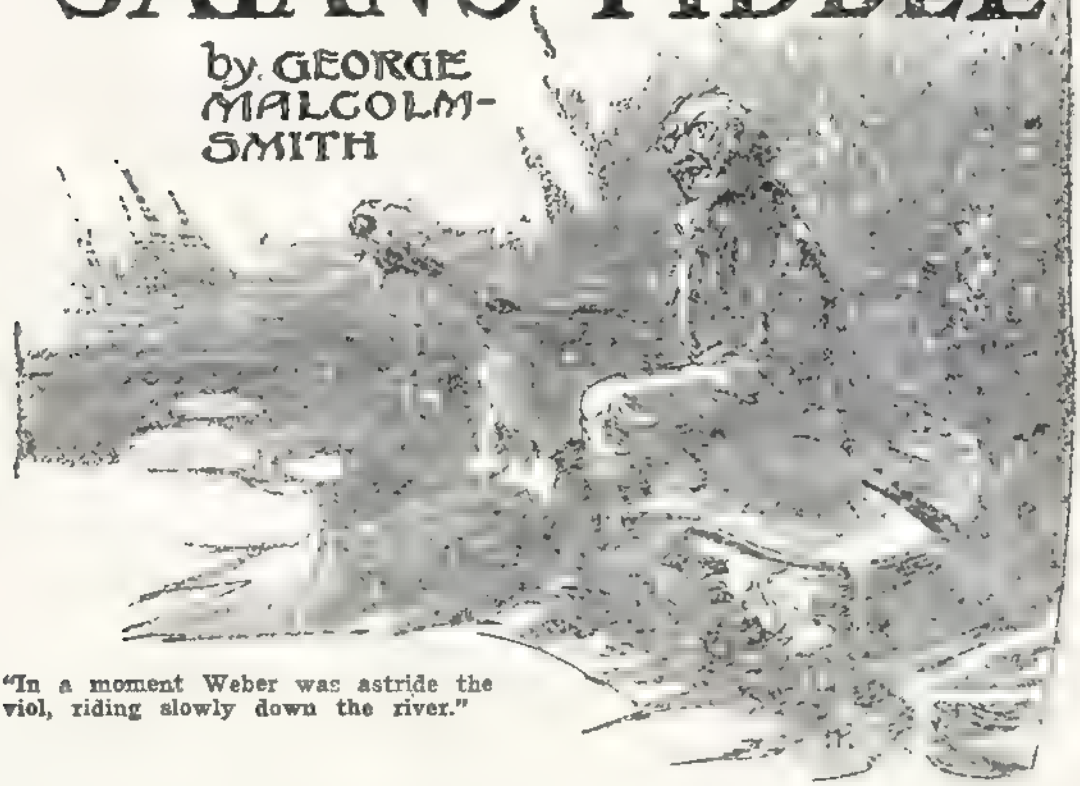
"They came together seeking admittance to Karneter. Bring both that we may judge them together."

Buell, manacled and helpless in the grip of his giant guards, had a feeling of impending doom as the repul-

(Continued on page 285)

SATAN'S FIDDLE

by GEORGE MALCOLM-SMITH



"In a moment Weber was astride the viol, riding slowly down the river."

A SNOWSTORM in New England is a snowstorm. This truth was brought home convincingly to Hagedorn as he trudged up Huntington Avenue in Boston one midnight. Then, to make matters worse, just as he reached Massachusetts Avenue, the skies ripped open and spilled a torrent of hailstones. Tiny white frozen balls pelted him, landing on his hat as loudly as raindrops on a tin roof.

Through the beaded curtain of hailstones Hagedorn discerned before him the dim outline of Symphony Hall and stumbled clumsily toward it for refuge. The high steps of the main entrance would be too slippery, he decided, so he bolted for the Massachusetts Avenue doors.

He stood there roundly cursing the elements for fully fifteen minutes, when there came to his ears a rumbling sound which seemed to emanate from within the building. It was in Hagedorn's nature to be curious. He put his ear close to one of the glass doors and tried the doorknobs. He was surprized to find one of the doors unlocked.

Midnight, and a door unlocked! Could this be the usual condition? Automatically, Hagedorn opened the door and stepped into the foyer. No sooner had the warmth of the interior struck his face than the rumbling sound became quite loud.

He stood rigid. The sound he heard was a musical chord of deep bass. It sounded much like an organ, though certainly (Hagedorn told himself) no organ recital would be going on at this time of night. Propelled by his curiosity, he stepped

softly toward the inner doors. There was just enough light from the street for him to see his way.

When he reached the doors to the orchestra floor, he noted through one of their little round windows that there were no lights in the auditorium. This perplexed him. This, and the ever-increasing volume of the bass music.

He stood peering into the black circle framed by the little round window, thoroughly mystified. If someone were playing, where was he? The music was coming from the auditorium; of that he was certain. And why this playing without lights? And at this unearthly hour?

Suddenly the bass chords ceased, and as they did so, Hagedorn heard several plucking sounds — quick, staccato notes—which convinced him he had not been listening to an organ, but to some stringed instrument. A bass viol, he decided—a very large bass viol.

Soon the unseen musician resumed his concert. Reverberating bass notes again came to Hagedorn's ears. The solo this time seemed to contain no rests. The tones droned on and on unceasingly. Hagedorn marked this and thought it unusual. The notes ranged from the lowest rumbling bass to the mellowest cellolike tone. Their echoes became so loud and thick that the playing soon ceased to be music. It became a roaring jumble, ever increasing in volume.

Hagedorn's mystification had been overcome by an uncomfortable feeling akin to fright. There was something eery about this experience which caused chills to run down his back and made his heart beat faster.

Then the bass roar ceased again. Hagedorn shuddered with relief. The mystery of this midnight concert and the ominous sound of the bass viol made him believe that danger was imminent. He started blindly for the foyer. He was in the street in an instant, and the cold air refreshed him as a thing natural and real. The hailstorm was over, and a light snow was falling.

Hagedorn was not of a mind to go home until he had learned more. He watched from across the street, intent upon the unlocked door. Whoever was inside, he told himself, would come out there.

A huge, overtowering form emerged from the door. Hagedorn squinted to see it better. It was a man with a giant bass viol slung over his back. With an awkward, jerky motion, the figure hobbled away and was hidden by the screen of snowflakes that stretched across Massachusetts Avenue.

Hagedorn did not follow the musician. He stood still for several minutes, then turned toward Huntington Avenue. He pondered over his strange experience all the way to his lodging house and far into the night. The adventure was unusual, mysterious, terrifying, and yet ludicrous. It tortured him in his sleep and was on his mind when he awoke.

In the evening, impelled by his intense curiosity and his desire to solve the riddle, he went to the concert at Symphony Hall. He arrived early. In fact, he was almost the first person to enter the auditorium.

People had told Hagedorn that their first visit to Symphony Hall had frightened them. They said they had experienced a feeling of being overwhelmed by something vast and terrifying. The bigness of the place scared them. The notion had hitherto appeared ridiculous to him, but as he sat in the hall this night he became more and more convinced that there was no little basis for his friends' convictions.

Symphony Hall *was* a big place, and it had now assumed an aspect sinister and unworldly. Perhaps the

ponderous Victorian architecture was the cause of it, Hagedorn reasoned with himself. Everything was too heavy and ornate.

The massive walls seemed to be leaning inward, as though they were about to close upon him and crush him. The blur of sickly colors, most of them bluish and fustian, depressed him. A huge girandole, suspended at an awesome height above his head, showering a hundred balls of light like a bomb at the moment of explosion, seemed on the verge of ripping from its fastenings to come hurtling down on his head.

As the auditorium filled, a sweep of pink and white faces jammed the orchestra floor like thousands of marbles in a box too small for them. Jutting perilously over this mass of heads were two crescent-shaped balconies, each crammed with still more faces.

All these people! Hagedorn gasped. They could not know what he knew, sitting here calmly like this. They could not know what ominous thing hovered over this scene.

Hagedorn decided not to look about too much, lest the terrifying thought of what might happen should the walls and ceilings tumble down send him screaming panic-stricken up the aisle and out of the building. He was absolutely convinced that he had heard in those bass chords of the night before an omen of disaster.

On this night every seat in Symphony Hall was occupied, because Hermann Schurtz, the new conductor, just arrived from Berlin to take Liebeskind's position, was to lead the orchestra for the first time.

Even before the first musician had taken his place on the stage, the drone of hundreds of voices had become a roar. Hagedorn imagined that every music-lover in Boston, even in the United States, had found his way into the auditorium, and he wondered if any one of them sensed the evil that lurked near them.

Sauntering in by twos and threes, the musicians took their positions, some of them amid a clatter of hand-clapping. Incongruous little sounds were coming from them, as they tuned their instruments. Hagedorn's eyes were now focused on the platform. With bated breath he noted the entrance of every player. Any one of them might be the mysterious musician who gave the weird solo of the previous night. His nerves taut with excitement, he watched the nine bass viol players take their places on the top tier above the others. Which one had slipped out of the unlocked door and into the storm last night? Hagedorn watched every move of each viol player, but there was nothing to indicate which was the man he sought.

At length all the musicians were in their places in three semicircular tiers. The cautious, discreet plucking of strings and tooting of horns had subsided. Men and instruments were in readiness—and a jumbled spectacle they made, faces, instruments and shirt-fronts fused together in a hodgepodge under the glaring white lights. The colorful sight gave Hagedorn relief from his strained feelings.

With the last sounds of instruments being tuned, the roar of voices in the audience subsided. There came over the auditorium a hush of expectation.

Suddenly a new figure appeared in the door at the side of the stage. Hermann Schurtz, the new conductor! A din of applause swept through the hall.

Schurtz was slight in physique and impeccably tailored. He had a dainty, almost feminine bearing, carrying his elbows inward behind his back as though they were tied there, and letting his hands dangle limply at his sides. He reminded Hagedorn of the

statue of Nathan Hale in City Hall Park, New York. Schurtz looked a dainty and effeminate Nathan Hale saying, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my art." He bowed perfunctorily and with no further ado turned toward the orchestra.

Facing the blur of faces, shirt-fronts, music racks and instruments, he preened himself by shrugging his shoulders and stretching his arms. He waited one long dramatic moment, then gave his music rack a tap with his baton. He raised it and, like a magician waving his wand, his arms writhing in and out, he summoned wondrous harmonies out of the confused throng of creatures before him. Their sounds would rush out at him with a menacing roar when he beckoned, or retreat with a docile sigh when he waved them back.

Hagedorn, his mind momentarily occupied by the present proceedings, consulted his program. It was Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben*, that mad, chaotic tone-poem which ranges through the whole cycle of human emotions. The stage was alive with pictorial rhythm. Heads nodded, bodies swerved, bows guided by flexible wrists darted across strings—all in perfect unison. Waves of music surged out and flooded the hall, then seethed back.

Ein Heldenleben had reached the passage wherein the hero returns to his helpmate after a tumultuous battle with his enemies. At that point, Hagedorn, watching every motion on the stage with a strange nervous anxiety, became aware of a peculiar behavior on the part of the conductor.

Schurtz appeared to be falling off his platform. He made jerky gestures with his hands as though warding away something invisible which was pushing him off his stand. As the score neared its conclusion, this became more noticeable. Hagedorn sensed danger. He saw that those about him shared his nervousness. A stir passed through the audience. The musicians, too, seemed perplexed by the conductor's movements. Some of their faces manifested alarm. Perhaps, Hagedorn tried to convince himself, the titanic emotions of the music were overpowering the sensitive conductor. At last the piece came to an end—an end solemn and dirgelike with a melancholy preponderance of bass.

As the last rumbling bass notes died away, Schurtz swayed awkwardly from his pedestal. He wheeled to face the audience. Hagedorn gasped and leaped half-way to his feet. On the conductor's countenance was a look of open-mouthed bewilderment and horror. It was the face of a man who had peeked into eternity. Schurtz had seen something, heard something or felt something which had terrified him. With a horrible grimace he drooped forward to make his bow. He turned, his body still bent, to leave the stage, then toppled clumsily over and sprawled in a ludicrous heap.

The orchestra surged to its feet. A roar of dismay echoed through the audience. Several musicians rushed to the crumpled figure. Then everything became confused. There were shouts and gestures. In the hubbub Schurtz's limp body was bundled off the stage.

Hagedorn found himself fighting toward the aisle, intent, for a reason unknown even to himself, upon reaching the stage. But the crowd, babbling and pushing and waving its arms, thrust him back. Then came a hissing sound and the audience became quiet. Hagedorn saw the concert-master shrieking something to the listening throng. Those near the stage who heard him began pushing toward the rear of the auditorium. The next thing he knew,

Hagedorn was being borne up the aisle by the wave of people. The concert had come to an abrupt end.

The crowd was moving slowly, and before it had borne Hagedorn to the foyer he had recovered his composure and decided upon a plan of action. He would wait a short distance up Massachusetts Avenue until the mysterious bass viol player came, then follow him. There was absolutely no doubt in his mind that the man who had played those ominous notes in the dark hall on the previous night was the person responsible for this night's occurrence. In the foyer, the crowd that had pressed Hagedorn thinned out.

"Hermann Schurtz is dead," he heard someone say.

He gasped and sped on his way.

It was snowing outside. A swirling avalanche of white flakes made it impossible to see the opposite side of the street. Cabs creaked up to wheel off patrons as they came out of the hall. Hagedorn bolted straight up Massachusetts Avenue. At St. Stephens Street he halted. A street lamp cast a faint yellow circle, inside which, he thought, he could see everyone who passed. He stepped outside it and stood near by at the corner of an apartment house.

Pedestrian patrons of the orchestra passed him. After fifteen minutes the last of them had appeared in the light of the lamp and disappeared. A sudden fear came to the watcher that he had missed his man. Perhaps he had left the hall before Hagedorn, or had taken another route home.

Hagedorn had almost decided to abandon his watch when a bulky figure appeared in the flickering light. It was a man carrying a bass viol on his back. Hagedorn's heart leaped. He narrowed his eyes to see. Then he gave a start, for the man's head poked itself around the side of his huge burden.

It may have been his imagination, made susceptible to the wildest fancies by his excitement, which made Hagedorn's hair stand on end when he viewed the face before him. It was a face ashen-gray, lean and cadaverous, with a look of almost satanic hatred. Before Hagedorn had recovered himself, however, the huge figure was swallowed up in the sheet of falling snow.

In the face he had just seen Hagedorn believed he had found such diabolical villainy that the solution of all the weird mystery of Symphony Hall narrowed down and focused upon one pair of gleaming eyes and one sneering mouth.

The chase was on. There was no hesitancy on Hagedorn's part. He scampered through the snow. Under the next street lamp he saw the ponderous figure forging ahead like an ant struggling under a heavy load. He quickened his step to make sure he would not lose his quarry. The labyrinth of zigzag streets of Back Bay, he knew, would make it a merry chase.

At every lamp-post he could see the ominous bulk of man and burden. No sooner would it be outside the dim light than Hagedorn would push into it himself. The man with the bass viol did not turn around, but plowed steadily ahead. Half-way up Massachusetts Avenue he turned into an alley and cut through to Gainsborough Street. Hagedorn was close behind him when he reached the other end of the alley.

Then he lost him. His prey had disappeared between lamp-posts on Gainsborough Street. Perhaps he had dived into one of the hundreds of doorways which lined the sidewalk. None of the windows of these houses was lighted, however, so Hagedorn determined to press onward. His pace might have been too slow. As he trudged on, it seemed the snow mounted higher with every

step. It was ankle-deep now, and making progress difficult.

Looking down at the white expanse ahead, Hagedorn's heart gave a joyful start, for there was visible a trail of footprints, so deep that they must have been made by one carrying something heavy. He noticed that the tracks were spreading farther and farther apart. He bent diagonal with the sidewalk as he stumbled on. There could be no doubt about it: his incredible quarry was fleeing. Perhaps the man with the bass viol realized he was being followed. Hagedorn bounded clumsily ahead, his eyes focused on the ever-lengthening footprints.

The trail swerved abruptly down Heminway Street. Hagedorn nearly fell as he pivoted obliquely around the corner. It occurred to him that his man had taken a roundabout course to reach the end of Massachusetts Avenue, and quite convinced him that the fellow was aware of being pursued. He raised his eyes from the white ground, then leaped quickly backward. There, only a few paces ahead, was the huge bass viol, the legs propelling it making it look for all the world like a lumbering dinosaur out of a geology book.

Hagedorn's egregious fugitive was not running now. He had probably reckoned that his pursuer was shaken off. He passed two more lamp-posts, and as he stepped out of the light of each his follower replaced him. To Hagedorn's chagrin, however, when the third lamp appeared the bulky figure was not visible. He looked down at the tracks. The outlandish scamp had started running again!

The chase was resumed at top speed. The snowflakes began to torment Hagedorn. They swarmed around him like little white flies, peppering his face and getting into his eyes.

The trail turned into Fenway Park. For several yards there were running steps, then they dwindled into a short pace. His fatigue and the plaguing snowflakes had nearly maddened Hagedorn. Several times he almost determined to renounce the chase, but he plodded on through Peterborough Street, up St. Botolph, over Boylston to Audubon Road—a crazy, zigzag course.

In a little street off Audubon Road the long trail came to an abrupt end. The footprints had ceased. Hagedorn looked about him nonplussed. A mantle of falling snow enveloped him. He could see he was standing beside a high board fence—but that was all he could see.

Had the whole combination, man and burden, flown into the skies? Actually entertaining this absurd theory for a moment, he laughed to catch himself gazing into the snow-flecked heavens. It was fortunate he did so, for in so doing he discovered where his man had taken flight. On top of the fence was a space where the ridge of snow had been brushed off. It was a high fence. How had the rogue made the ascent, laden as he was with his heavy instrument? But Hagedorn lost no time in cogitation. Over the fence he clambered.

Inside was a small courtyard flanked by gloomy buildings. The intruder peered through the grayish curtain of snow. A square of bright orange light appeared in one corner of the court. Framed in it was a gigantic silhouette, that of a man with a bass viol on his back. Hagedorn plunged madly toward it, but before he could reach the spot the square of orange had narrowed to a mere crack. This disappeared just as he reached the door. He stood outside for a moment, listening. Then, with a bravery for which he was never afterward able to account, he turned the knob and slipped inside.

He found himself standing in a narrow hallway. A hanging lamp gave a brilliant light, revealing a steep flight of stairs. Suddenly he heard a door close on the floor above, and the sound of something heavy striking the floor. The bass viol! At that moment a feeling of shame came over Hagedorn. Now that the chase ended, his excitement subsided and his rational intellect asserted itself. Perhaps he had been foolish to undertake this mad pursuit. As he thought it over he suspected that mere curiosity had brought him here. He had no real reason for believing that last night's strange occurrence could be linked with tonight's tragedy, nor had he any basis for condemning this unknown and perhaps harmless individual, beyond ideas conjured up by an overwrought imagination. But now he had come this far, why not go just to the top of the stairs to see where this unusual character kept himself?

He grasped the baluster and crept noiselessly upward. There was no light on the landing, but he noticed a faint yellow gleam, apparently from beneath a door at the end of the hallway. He tiptoed toward the light, wondering if this were the musician's room. He stood there listening, but there was not a sound inside. Curiosity again got the better of him. He knelt on one knee. Something in the keyhole! Stiff with excitement and cold, he must have knelt there several minutes. Nothing was going on inside the room.

Then something happened—and happened quickly!

A viselike arm grasped his waist, a damp hand clamped over his mouth, and he was swept high off his feet. All this in an instant and without a sound. He quaked with terror. He felt himself being whisked away. Strong arms, several of them, were bearing him head-first down the stairs. His senses were swimming. An arm over his face hid everything. Around a corner he went. A click came like the shooting of a gun. It was the turning of a key, and he felt himself being carried into a room. The arm over his face was removed but a hand still held his mouth. In the darkness he could hear his captors breathing heavily.

"Well, we didn't expect this," one of them whispered gruffly.

"Who the hell is he?" another rasped out.

"Here, one of you put on the light. I'll hold him."

The light flashed on. There were three men, one of them still holding Hagedorn's mouth. They were burly men in hats and overcoats. They gazed at him quizzically. Hagedorn was coming to his senses, glad to find he was dealing with tangible flesh-and-blood beings.

"Tie him and gag him, Maddigan," said the man holding Hagedorn.

As the man called Maddigan pushed back his coat to get his handkerchief, Hagedorn saw a badge.

Detectives! Hagedorn's relief was exhilarating. He attempted to prevent Maddigan from shoving the handkerchief into his mouth. Maddigan grinned as he would at a playful kitten. After the captive had been gagged and trussed, the three detectives stood watching him. They decided to go through his pockets. They found nothing but a wallet, a watch and his symphony program. The last article interested them most.

"Did you just come from Symphony Hall?" Maddigan asked.

Hagedorn nodded.

"What brought you here, peeking into other people's keyholes?" he demanded, as though Hagedorn could answer through the gag.

"Here, we'll get the dope from him," said one of the other two men as he drew a revolver from his pocket. "Take off that gag."

Brandishing the weapon in Hagedorn's face, he growled, "One loud word from you and I'll send a bullet through your skull. This is a serious business."

The handkerchief was removed from the captive's mouth. Hagedorn talked fast and earnestly, careful not to raise his voice above an almost inaudible whisper. The detectives considered Hagedorn's reasons for his presence a bit fantastic, but they believed his story. Hagedorn opened his wallet and produced his press card, explaining that he had a special interest in the extraordinary happenings at Symphony Hall. This was entirely an afterthought, but it carried weight with the detectives.

"Now that you're here," said Maddigan, "we might as well let you know that the answer to a good many of the strange goings on at Symphony Hall lies right here in this house. We're going to follow this thing right through from here, and if you want the big break when it comes — after we get this case cleaned up—it will be wise for you to keep your mouth shut about what is going on. As we said before, this is a serious business, and we can't have any interference."

In the low-pitched conversation which followed, Hagedorn obtained many new and astonishing angles on the Symphony Hall mystery. The death of Schurtz, it developed, was the culmination of mysterious happenings which covered a period of several months. Liebeskind, Schurtz's predecessor as conductor of the orchestra, was said by the detectives to have left his position and fled the country as the result of these happenings. The attention of the police had been brought to the case when members of the orchestra reported that the former leader had received threatening anonymous letters. Before an investigation could be brought to bear, Liebeskind had mysteriously disappeared.

This incident had been considered at first as merely the outcome of a clash between artistic temperaments. Later several other musicians took unceremonious leave of the orchestra. Some unknown influence was gradually disrupting the entire organization. It was then that an interest was taken in one of the bass players, Friedrich Weber, known by his fellow-musicians as an eccentric, though brilliant, character. Weber's habits were peculiar, but his long association with the orchestra and the high esteem in which leaders in music circles held him had diverted suspicion from him. But now his eccentricities assumed ominous significance. One of his odd practises, Hagedorn learned, was to play his bass viol all alone and in the dark at midnight in Symphony Hall. This had long been a habit with him, but the police attached some hidden meaning to it. Tonight, unless the tragic incident at the concert had upset Weber, he was expected by the detectives to repeat his nocturnal rehearsal.

Hence, shortly before midnight, the lights in the room were extinguished and a long, tense vigil began. Hagedorn sat anxiously awaiting the next development in his strange adventure.

At length, above the heavy breathing of his companions, he heard a slow, thumping sound as of a heavy man descending stairs.

"It's him!" one of the detectives whispered hoarsely. "He's going down to Symphony Hall again tonight."

The footfalls descended slowly, then halted outside the door of the

room in which the quartet sat waiting. There was a few moments' silence, then came the click of a doorlock. Hagedorn followed his companions to the window overlooking the courtyard. Over their shoulders he saw a gigantic shape, black and sinister as it was silhouetted by the snow, dissolve like a specter in the curtain of snowflakes.

MADDIGAN dispatched his fellows to shadow the musician. When they had stepped out into the white night, he and Hagedorn went upstairs to the room occupied by Weber. The door opened easily with a skeleton key.

It was evident to Hagedorn the instant he stepped inside that he was in the quarters of a man of extraordinary culture. The walls were flanked by crowded bookshelves. An upright piano, with opened scores of music on its rack and stacks of them on its top, stood in one corner. Near it were a cello leaning against a chair, and a music rack. In the center of the room was a table littered with books, pamphlets, music scores and hand-written sheets of foolscap. A bed-couch stood in front of a wall covered with books.

Maddigan stalked about the room silently. Hagedorn watched him, wondering what this burly plebeian could find in this storehouse of culture to give him insight into the mind of the man he was studying.

Hagedorn walked over to a bookshelf. He saw volumes in German, French and English, a heterogeneous array on philosophy, psychology and abstract mathematics. A strange library for a musician, Hagedorn mused. Here were Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Haeckel and other philosophers jammed into shelves with such psychologists as Freud, Jung, William James, and such physicists as Einstein and Herglotz. Indeed, Hagedorn thought, here must be a bass viol player who played metaphysical theories from notes diagrammed on graph-paper!

He examined the open sheets on the piano rack. Here was a score by Richard Strauss, whose *Ein Heldenleben* had been played by the orchestra tonight. On its margin were many notes jotted down in ink. Many of the notes were scratched out, and several of them had exclamation points after them. The sight of exclamation points written in beside musical notes amused Hagedorn for a moment, but then he began wondering vaguely if there were not some underlying significance in them. On top of the piano were pieces by Wagner, Liszt and Beethoven. Among these Hagedorn was surprized to find one by Hermann Schurtz, the conductor who had met so sudden a death. On this, too, there were many marginal notes inscribed in ink.

Maddigan was examining the littered table in the center of the room. Suddenly he looked up from a pamphlet he held in his hand.

"Look here," he said. "Here's a book by Weber."

Hagedorn noted the title: "*Acoustics; Their Importance in Architecture,* by Friedrich Weber." A feeling of acute uneasiness seized him as he saw this and remembered the roaring notes he had heard the night before in Symphony Hall. It made him quite sure that there had been some malevolent purpose in them and that this purpose was all the more fearful because of the player's expert knowledge of what he was about.

Maddigan had been looking through other papers on the desk. He was reading something and grunting. Hagedorn looked over his shoulder. It was a symphony program opened at the page containing the names of the orchestra

players. On the page were scribbles in ink.

"Can you make anything out of this?" Maddigan asked.

Hagedorn took the program.

"It's German script," he announced.

"Can you read it?"

Hagedorn examined the writing closely. Then he gave a start which made his companion look at him in alarm.

"What does it say?" asked Maddigan.

Hagedorn pointed to the name of Hermann Schurtz, and said, "That word there, *die Todsaite.*"

"What does it mean in English?"

"It means—'the death-chord'!"

"The what?"

Suddenly there was a sharp rap on the door. Hagedorn's heart missed several beats. Maddigan himself looked far from composed. He wheeled around and pulled open the door. One of the detectives stood in the hallway. He was covered with snow and panting for want of breath.

"Quick!" he whispered. "He's coming back. Get out before he catches you."

Maddigan beckoned to Hagedorn. He turned the key in the lock and the three hurried down the stairs. They were in their room barely in time, for the door from the courtyard opened and there came the sound of footfalls on the stairs. Several minutes later the third detective returned. He and the other explained that Weber had gone back to Symphony Hall, found several people still there and had started for home again. One of the men had hurried ahead to warn Maddigan of the musician's approach.

The remainder of the night one man remained in the room. The other two left with Hagedorn.

"That settles it," were Maddigan's parting words to Hagedorn. "We're on the right track, and tomorrow this thing will be cleared up."

Nevertheless, tomorrow did not see the matter "cleared up", for the coroner's finding of that night gave the cause of Hermann Schurtz's death as "heart failure, superinduced by overtaxed emotions."

As far as Hagedorn was concerned, however, the matter was quite settled. What he had seen in Weber's quarters had convinced him that there was more to Schurtz's death and all the strange occurrences connected with it than the coroner had believed. He went to Professor Haroutune Chooljian, noted Armenian physicist of Harvard, under whom he had studied and whom he had kept as a close friend. In the professor he confided his whole adventure in the hope that he might shed some light on the relationship between music and physics, both of which subjects seemed well known to the mysterious Weber. The professor knew the musician and believed him a man of remarkable intellect. He became intensely interested in Hagedorn's adventure, and begged to be notified of every new development.

The next symphony concert was not for two nights. Hagedorn could not have missed it any more than he could have stopped breathing and live. As he entered the foyer he caught sight of Maddigan talking to the policeman in charge of the hall. So, the police have not dropped the case, either, Hagedorn mused.

He was as restless in his seat as a schoolboy attending his first circus. At length the man for whom he waited appeared on the stage. Hagedorn gasped, for he could not believe such a transformation possible. Truly, here was a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde! When Weber ap-

peared, he was the epitome of urbanity and self-composure. Hagedorn could not believe this was the satanic face which had snarled at him from behind the bass viol two nights before. His eyes followed Weber's every move.

Lessing, the concert-master, conducted the orchestra that night. The feature of the program was a score by Berlioz, a composer whose penchant for percussion effects is proverbial among musicians. For that reason, during the few moments in which Hagedorn was not watching the movements of Weber, he obtained entertainment from observation of the kettledrummer.

This interesting person was worthy of attention. He stood above his instruments, sticks in hand, looking out over the audience with a studied sang-froid, counting the measures with motionless lips. Suddenly, on the flash of an instant, a paroxysm would seize him, causing him to pounce upon his drums, and then, as suddenly as the convulsion had overtaken him, it would depart and he would throw his head back, calm and unruffled as he had been before.

The drummer had passed through several of his spasms during the course of the score. Then came a passage in which all the instruments were silent except the violins, which wavered a plaintive melody. Suddenly the conductor pointed his baton toward the custodian of the kettledrums.

The drummer's arm slashed the air. His padded mallet shot downward, swift and sure as a piston from its cylinder. It smote the taut parchment of the drum, giving a deep, hollow boom like the sound of a heavy stone dropped into a deep pool.

Hagedorn happened at the moment to be watching the drummer. He saw his face bob up quickly, but not with its accustomed serenity, for to Hagedorn's horror he saw in it the ghastly expression which Schurtz had turned to the audience the moment before his death. The drummer swayed and fell across the mouth of his drum, his body making a deep thump as it hit the drumhead. Hagedorn lurched bolt-upright, his lips framed to utter a shriek.

He turned his eyes instinctively to Weber. There stood the bass viol player with his bow high above his head, his gaze fastened on the fallen kettledrummer. For an instant Hagedorn fancied there was a gleam of triumph on the bass viol player's countenance. Was it the look of a man who had accomplished some arduous task? Hagedorn shuddered.

The tumult which followed was greater even than that of the previous fatal night. The concert-master waved his arms frantically in a vain effort to quiet the audience. The audience chattered in wildest excitement. The stage was a scene of utter confusion. Three or four players were struggling with the drummer's limp body to drag it down from the percussionists' perch while all the others were fighting in a panic to get through the narrow door leading off the stage.

Hagedorn took no chances of being caught in the crowd. His first impulse was to dash out of the auditorium. In the foyer he caught a fleeting glimpse of Maddigan rushing down the inner corridor toward the stage.

Just as he reached the Massachusetts Avenue doors he heard a yell behind him.

"Hagedorn!"

He whirled about to see the diminutive figure of Professor Chooljian. His friend's presence surprized him.

"Why, Professor! What are you doing here?" he asked.

"Wait, you shall see," said the Armenian in his choppy Oriental ac-

cent. "The story you told me this afternoon interested me. I am sure I have the solution of the mystery. I couldn't believe it to be true at first, but what has happened tonight makes me certain. I have volunteered my services to the police. It is tragic that another life had to be lost. But tonight we shall put a stop to this affair."

"Come, come," blurted out Hagedorn rudely. "While we are talking here, the guilty man is making a getaway. Come quickly. I know where to find him."

"Not yet," said the professor insistently. "It isn't time yet. We shall stay right here until the crowds have gone away."

And that is exactly what they did. The police had accepted Professor Chooljian's theory, it developed, and he was to play a part in the plan to capture the culprit tonight and prove him guilty of two murders.

"We must wait some time," said the professor. "At midnight we shall join a squad of detectives and wait for the man to walk into our trap. He will do it, never fear. He is a madman."

The certainty of the professor's tone convinced Hagedorn.

"What do you make of it?" he inquired.

"Come, let us go elsewhere before the crowd comes out," the professor commanded. "I can explain everything later. We have more than two hours to wait."

They waited downtown at the Adams House, and there the professor gave his solution of the mystery.

"It's uncanny," he began. "I could not believe it myself at first, but it must be true. You see, Weber is a man of brilliant intellect, but a little warped. He is dangerous. He knows much. He has combined the supernatural and the natural, the psychic qualities of music and the unfailing natural laws of physics to make one of the most frightful death-weapons ever conceived."

"What does it all mean, Professor?" asked Hagedorn. "I don't understand."

"It's not an easy matter to explain," the professor said, "but in as simple terms as I can put it, the solution of the mystery is this: Music is like fire. When controlled and used in the proper way, it is of inestimable benefit to mankind, but once it eludes control or is put to a malevolent purpose, it can cause frightful havoc.

"This man Weber has developed the power to use music to further his own ends. He has gone quite insane, there is no doubt of that, but his insanity has only enhanced his brilliant powers. He has a supernormal perception of tone colorings. For instance, he is an expert on acoustics. He has spent years on the study of sound waves and their peculiarities. No concert hall has been built within the past ten years without his expert advice.

"Added to this keen musical acumen is an intense interest in philosophical subjects. He has an understanding of such matters which amounts to clairvoyance.

"When this remarkable intellect cracked under the strain of overstudy and overwork, it naturally became obsessed with ideas resulting from his studies. After more study, he has discovered a musical chord which can crush the soul of any man who hears it!

"He selected Liebeskind, the conductor, as his victim because of a long-standing temperamental feud between them. It is probable that Weber gave him a touch of the dose he intended to administer him. Whether he did or not, Liebeskind, who was losing prestige in musical circles anyway, had the excellent good sense to disappear.

"It had been comparatively simple for Weber to pick the chord which would end the life of the new conductor, and it is likely he did it merely for the sport. Schurtz was a cocky and vainglorious personage. To plumb the personality of the vacuous kettledrummer and strike his death note was even simpler. The victims, hearing the fatal chord all the quicker with their musically sensitive ears, had succumbed easily.

"But this fiend's great ambition, I believe from what I have gleaned from the case, is something which concerns all of us, every man living on this planet. Weber, believe me or not, has come very near discovering what physicists call 'the cosmic chord', that is, a chord composed of all the chromatic semitones in the entire musical range. And this chord, once discovered and held long enough, could bring universal destruction!

"I say I do not know how near Weber has come to discovering this chord, but I do know that if any man living has the power to accomplish it, that man is Weber."

The professor gave grim examples to illustrate his points. Glass vessels can be shattered to bits by tapping their sides and shouting into them; soldiers are commanded to break step in crossing bridges lest the vibration cause them to fall; scientists have killed fishes by playing violins in aquariums; the shrillest tones of the human voice are capable of extinguishing flame; the Festungburg cathedral tumbled to earth through the famous incident of the organist's holding one bass note. These and many other illustrations of the deadly powers of sound and vibration were cited by the professor. Hagedorn shuddered.

SHORTLY before midnight Hagedorn and Professor Chooljian returned to Symphony Hall. Outside they were met by Maddigan and several other detectives. Few words were exchanged. Maddigan led the group to the Massachusetts Avenue entrance. He tapped on one of the big doors. Before his knock was answered a detective came running down the street.

"You'll have to hurry, Maddigan," he said breathlessly. "He's on his way here right now!"

At that moment a man who was evidently the watchman opened the door.

"Everything ready, Dorgan?" asked Maddigan.

"Everything," the watchman said laconically.

"Come," Maddigan beckoned, and the party stumbled into the dark foyer and into the auditorium.

"Sit here," one of the detectives commanded Hagedorn, pointing to a chair. "We'll be spread through the house. Whatever happens, don't make a noise. If you do, God help you!"

Hagedorn sat motionless a long time. His nerves were taut. He did not know what to expect. Suddenly——

"Just practising, you know," a voice boomed throughout the auditorium. "It seems to do me much good to play in the dark with nobody here but my music and myself."

It was a mellow and resonant voice. Its pleasant quality was a surprize to Hagedorn, hearing it for the first time. Undoubtedly it was Weber.

"Well," came the voice of the watchman, "I'll be goin' my rounds now. Be sure to close the door after you as usual, and I'll lock it."

He was heard no more.

Heavy footfalls sounded as the weird musician thumped down the aisle under the weight of his instrument. Soon he was up on the stage. The bass viol made a resounding boom as it struck the stage floor. Then came sounds of the player re-

moving the case and preparing to play. Next the rasping noise of resin being rubbed on the bow. The sound chilled Hagedorn.

After a short pause, Hagedorn heard full, deep tones as the bow was drawn across the thick strings. They filled the auditorium like thunder. When they ceased presently, Hagedorn thought he heard the player say, "No, no," as though dissatisfied with his efforts.

In a few moments the notes were resumed. This time Hagedorn recognized the sound as that he had heard on the night he had crept into Symphony Hall to escape the hailstorm. There was that same roaring drone, ever increasing in volume. The musician was evidently playing the chromatic scale over and over in an endeavor to fill the hall with echoes until every note of the scale would sound at once.

The noise was a jumble at first, but now it was taking definite form. One great and powerful chord was emerging. When it reached predominance it made the floor electric with vibration. It swelled ever louder and louder. At the end of a quarter of an hour it was deafening. Hagedorn's ears began to roar. They seemed about to burst with a feeling like that experienced in passing into an underwater subway tube. Then a swirling sensation came into them and Hagedorn felt as though he were losing his balance. He gripped the arms of his chair. His head was numb and spinning as though he were horribly drunk.

Was this the "cosmic chord" of which the professor had spoken? Hagedorn half arose to shout. Then, remembering the detective's admonition to remain silent, he slouched back again. What were they waiting for? The building would collapse!

The thought terrified Hagedorn. He sat cramped in horror. Into his swirling brain came grim recollections of what the professor had told him. Death and destruction! He jumped to his feet with a roar. He swayed drunkenly. He would flee from the din before it drove him insane. Just as he reached the aisle he heard above the titanic rumble something which sounded like a voice. At first it was faint, then it swelled in volume even above the bass chord.

"Stop him! stop him!" it shrieked.

It was the professor. Hagedorn wheeled about and started blindly down the aisle in the direction of the voice. At the same time, above the roar of the bass viol, he heard a splintering sound from above. Terror wrenched his soul. The gigantic girandole had been jarred from its fastenings. There was a sharp whistle and the tinkling of glass as it shot downward, then an ear-splitting crash.

The bass chord stopped abruptly. Feet scuffled through broken glass and meaningless shouts came from different corners of the hall. A match flared up, revealing three detectives making clumsily for the stage, then went out.

Hagedorn stopped half-way down the aisle. The situation was both ludicrous and horrible. Ahead of him in the darkness a grim game of blind man's buff was in progress.

"Damn you, we'll shoot!" yelled a frantic voice.

"The lights, Dorgan, the lights!" came another voice.

Another match flickered, and by it Hagedorn saw several men in silhouette climbing onto the stage. The match went out. Feeling about for their prey with outstretched hands, the detectives were creeping over the stage like wild beasts. A knife might swish through the darkness into one of them. More horrible yet, it occurred to Hagedorn, that big

bass viol might come crashing down over the skull of one of them.

When at last the next match flame pierced the darkness, Hagedorn discerned a group of detectives huddled together in a group, each bent forward and pointing his pistol in a different direction. Before the match had flickered out, the hall became flooded with light. No one except the detectives stood on the stage. Weber had escaped in the darkness!

There was a sudden scampering down the aisle and the watchman Dorgan appeared.

"Maddigan!" he shouted. "Quick! Out the stage entrance! He went out that way, passing me like a hound outa hell and flooring me with his big fiddle!"

He had not finished speaking before the detectives were piling off the stage. Hagedorn was close behind them. As soon as they reached the street, they saw, plainly outlined against the snow, the figure of the musician rounding the corner, his cumbersome instrument on his back.

"After him!" Maddigan yelled. "Shoot him if he won't stop! He's a murderous maniac!"

The chase through the snow was brisk, but the distance between the fugitive and his pursuers as they dashed down the avenue lessened steadily. When he had reached Fenway Park, struggling desperately under his heavy load, the musician was not forty feet ahead of his would-be captors.

Hagedorn heard a panting voice behind him. He turned quickly as he ran and saw Professor Chooljian.

"By God, he almost did it—the cosmic chord!" gasped the little Armenian.

Weber had reached the bridge over the river. He plunged on unsteadily.

"He can't last," someone shouted. "We'll get him alive when he drops."

Then the retreating figure turned to face his pursuers. He made a gesture and shouted something. The detectives halted as though hypnotized, then all in unison gave a cry of astonishment, for with incredible agility the mad musician dashed onto the bridge and hurled himself and his burden over the railing.

The pursuers lunged forward. When they reached the railing, they saw the bass viol floating amid the ice and snow in the river. Then the outline of a head bobbed up near it. A hand reached out, grasped the floating instrument, and in a moment Weber was astride it, riding slowly down the river. A grotesque spectacle he made, but no one could laugh.

The detectives ran back to the end of the bridge and rushed down the river bank. Weber was floating not fifty feet out. He waved his hand.

Suddenly a revolver barked. Hagedorn and Professor Chooljian, standing on the bridge, saw Maddigan pull back his right arm, something flashing in his hand. The figure astride the bass viol toppled slowly over and slipped into the water. The bass viol floated on alone.

A Tale of Arab Sorcery

THE POWER OF THE DOG

By G. G. PENDARVES

"GREETING, *effendi!* I salute you in the name of Allah the Compassionate!"

Benson reined in his horse, as the Arab on the dusty brown camel approached. "You have no news?" he replied.

"None," said Abou Koi. "It is true that an Englishman was at the oasis of Wad Eles; we found him there with many servants—digging foolishly in the sand! But it was not *thy* Englishman."

The manager of the El Adrar mine frowned thoughtfully, staring out across the broad yellow plain. Up to the present, he had ruled his little community of natives and white men with marked success. He was straightforward in his methods, and although he had little sympathy with the subtle, devious ways of the Arabs—he was never unjust. He listened to them, often laughed at them, and gave them more rein than a weaker man would have thought wise.

Now, for the first time in his seven years of experience at El Adrar, he was faced with a problem which he could not solve. It was a month now since his head clerk, Stephen Adams, had vanished so unaccountably. It was a mystery—and above all things, Benson loathed a mystery!

"You are sure you have made no mistake?—you would recognize Adams effendi if you saw him?" Benson's gaze returned to the dark, sun-ravaged face of the old Arab.

"Hath Allah afflicted me with blindness, that I should not know him? What man could mistake his face—with one eye as blue as the lake of Kef-el-dour itself, and the other black as Eblis!"

"No—you could hardly fail to recognize him," admitted Benson. "Let us return to El Adrar now—I must see if the Bougie police have sent in their report yet."

As they approached El Adrar—with its handful of flat-roofed houses, and its native huts clinging like birds' nests to the rocky coast—Benson saw that an unusual crowd was gathered in the tiny market-square, and he rode up to ascertain the cause.

"It is Daouad!" Abou Koi informed him in an awed whisper.

Benson checked an angry exclamation. At every turn he came up against this name! Daouad the Wearer of the Veil, the worker of spells, the man whom Adams had named "dog" in a moment of provocation, and who had now avenged that insult in secret and terrible fashion, so the villagers said.

Always this everlasting Daouad! Benson was sick of the very sound of his name. There was not a shred of evidence to prove that Daouad had anything to do with Adams' disappearance; on the contrary there was indisputable proof that he had *not;* and yet the whispered rumors grew, and grew.

On horseback, Benson could see over the heads of the jostling, excited crowd. In their midst stood the veiled figure of Daouad, from whom the people shrank in awe, leaving a wide ring about him. He held a long whip in his hand, and its wicked lash flicked out continually, like a snake's tongue, to urge on a wretched yellow dog rolling in the dust before him.

The animal was being unmercifully punished by a vicious black-and-white mongrel, and its tawny coat was red with blood. The end was a matter of minutes now, for the black-and-white had a firm grip on the other's throat, and the yellow dog's struggles had almost ceased.

Benson slipped down from his horse, and was about to push his way through the crowd, when he felt a hand on his sleeve. He turned to find Abou Koi at his elbow, speaking low and urgently. "It is an evil thing to come between Daouad and his pleasure! He will do thee some ill!"

Benson was accustomed to the unthinking cruelty of the Arabs, and, up to a point, found it politic not to interfere; but an impulse stronger than himself now urged him to rescue the yellow dog from its fate. He shook off the restraining hand and elbowed the natives aside, and in another minute stood with a revolver smoking in his hand, while the black-and-white mongrel rolled over with a bullet in its brain.

Daouad and the Englishman faced each other over its dead body, while the yellow dog panted for breath.

The Arab laughed scornfully: "The *effendi* is merciful! May he obtain mercy when his hour comes!" There was a threat in his insolent words, and a murmur of fear ran round the ring of spectators.

Benson was stung to most unwonted fury. "You're making a nuisance of yourself, Daouad! I won't have you here in El Adrar frightening the women and children with your tales of devils and witchcraft! If I were a superstitious man, you would be in prison now for putting your spells on Adams effendi—but I won't flatter you by taking you so seriously. Let me hear no more of this foolishness!"

Without waiting for more, Benson turned on his heel, and beckoned to Abou Koi, who stood back with eyes full of fear.

"Bring the yellow dog to my stables," Benson ordered, and mounting his horse again, he rode through the village to his big white house by the sea.

HALF an hour later Abou Koi presented himself before the veranda where Benson lounged with a long drink at his elbow.

"Is the dog in my stables?" asked the latter.

"No, *effendi!* Daouad the Chief hath taken the animal to his own dwelling."

"What!" ejaculated Benson, his recent anger returning in a hot wave.

"Master, I was afraid," replied the other simply. "Thou, with the magic of a white man, canst withstand Daouad and the devil that dwelleth in him, but with me it is not so."

"Then I must go myself and get the dog," replied Benson, after a long pause.

Abou Koi shrank back, holding his hand before his face, and wailed. "Thou too—thou too wilt vanish as did Adams effendi! Daouad will——"

"I tell you Daouad had nothing whatever to do with Adams effendi!" interrupted Benson impatiently. "That, I have proved. Daouad was up in the hills at Beni Gaza that day. And it was here, in this village, that Adams effendi vanished. He was seen approaching the village by the bridge, and walking along the road

where it lies in the shadow of the eucalyptus trees!"

"Yea!" answered Abou Koi. "And beyond those trees doth Daouad dwell!"

"But Daouad was not there that day—and I had the house and gardens searched before he returned from Beni Gaza."

"Daouad *was* there that day," returned Abou Koi solemnly. "What if he was seen at Beni Gaza in that hour! Hath he not power to clothe a devil like to himself—and appear thus where he will?"

"Then I suppose you believe that both Daouad and Adams effendi were in the house when I searched it?"

"Master, I do believe it. They were there, but Daouad caused your eyes to be blind, that you might not see!"

"That is damned nonsense!" said Benson, striding across the veranda.

It was more than a question of rescuing a miserable yellow cur, reflected Benson, as he walked up the village street—where swift blue dusk fell softly, lit by braziers of glowing charcoal and the firefly gleam of the smokers' pipes. Yes—it was a challenge to Daouad! The man had defied him by keeping the dog, and Benson intended to humble this insolent chief in the eyes of the credulous villagers.

As he neared Daouad's dwelling, and was about to enter the belt of dense shadow thrown by the trees across the dusty road, a long-drawn howling rose and fell, with an indescribably mournful cadence. Benson was surprized at the stab of fear he felt, and squared his shoulders impatiently.

"It's infectious—this talk of ghosts and devils," he murmured. "I'll be as foolish as any ignorant beggar in El Adrar soon!"

Again that wailing inhuman sound—and the eucalyptus trees rustled trembling leaves in warning, as it died away.

Then as Benson looked ahead, he tasted fear again, so sharp and poignant that his joints seemed turned to water. A few yards away, on the little bridge beyond the trees, stood the tall veiled figure of Daouad—apparently risen from the ground!

The Englishman rallied all his common sense to his aid. "He's been expecting me, of course," he thought, "and he's going to try a few of his conjuring tricks."

Deliberately he took out a cigarette, and lit it with steady hands.

"Well, Daouad!" he said to the motionless figure. "I've come for that dog."

"The dog is my dog," came the deep answering voice.

"You can dispute that, if you like, before the magistrate next week. You don't know how to treat an animal, and I claim it. If you don't hand it over at once, I'll have you arrested!"

"Thou, too, art afraid then!"

"Not of an Arab dog!"

"Dog! That word again to me!"

The veiled figure approached, and Benson caught the glitter of the dark eyes, between hood and *littrem.**

"Look, white man! Look and see the power of the dog!"

Benson felt a swift wind fan his face, and his eyes smarted as though staring at the midday sun. The aromatic gloom of the eucalyptus trees vanished, and in its place he saw a vast stretch of gray desert, from whose sandy floor heat rose in visible waves, to meet the white glare of the sky above. Across the desert a dark moving mass of horsemen passed with tossing spears. A great army—and at their head, the proudest and most kingly of all that splendid tribe—rode Daouad the Chief!

* Blue veil worn over nose and mouth.

"The servants of the dog!" A voice sounded faintly in Benson's ear.

The desert darkened swiftly, and under a red moon Benson saw a world of tents and the gleam of campfires—stretching over the sands to far-distant boundaries.

But his horror-stricken gaze was focused on something in the foreground of the picture. Something hardly human, that crawled blind and writhing in the shifting sands, while Daouad spurned it with sandaled foot and urged his slaves to further torture.

As Benson stared spellbound, the chief snatched a flaming brand from a brazier at his side, and beckoned with imperious hand. Powerless to resist, Benson stumbled forward until he was face to face with Daouad's victim. From its twisted, blackened features, two eyes met his—the eyes of one in hell—but unmistakable to Benson! For one was blue as the Lake of Kef-el-dour and the other black as Eblis!

Daouad laughed insolently as he saw that Benson understood—then, with a fierce gesture, thrust the blazing brand into his victim's face.

Again that fiery wind fanned Benson's face; he saw the desert no longer—but only the little bridge, and the silver trunks of the eucalyptus trees, and the tall veiled figure of Daouad blotting out the moonlight before him.

He drew a deep breath, shaken to the very soul by that sudden opening of the gates of hell, yet he stood his ground stubbornly.

"Try again, Daouad!" he said, steadying his voice by an immense effort of will. "A very neat trick, I admit, but——"

"Yet you feared greatly, white man!" said the chief, pointing to the other's hands. Benson involuntarily glanced down, and saw the palms of them marked deep with the indents of his own fingernails. He bit his lip at the betrayal—but his eyes were steady as he confronted Daouad.

"I admit that you took me by surprize," he answered lightly. "However, as it is only a conjuring trick——"

Daouad smiled evilly. "It was a true vision you beheld. Did he not call me dog?"

"If I believed that," replied Benson, his words stumbling and indistinct, because of a sudden dryness of his mouth, "you should be hanged before dawn breaks, for the dog you are!"

The Arab's eyes blazed, and he lifted one hand in a threatening gesture. Benson drew his revolver and covered him instantly.

"Enough of this fooling!" he snapped. "I want that yellow dog—and at once!"

Daouad came a few paces nearer. "Shoot, white man! Try your magic against mine!" was the insolent reply.

In a white heat of rage, Benson drew the trigger, and—nothing happened.

"By Eblis!" mocked the Arab. "Said I not thou wert afraid? So lost in fear and wonder of my magic, that I have drawn thy sting without thy knowledge."

Benson could not repress a gasp. It was true—the devil had indeed removed his cartridges, while he himself had stood, fuddled and afraid, like any ignorant native.

"Your trick!" he said quietly, his strong face set in its grimmest lines, "You are a clever rogue—too clever altogether for El Adrar! And now that you have done your little turn, and satisfied yourself that you can impose on a white man—we may consider the show is ended."

"For you—yes! The show is ended!"

Benson controlled a shiver. There was a sinister ring he did not like in Daouad's slow words.

"You shall learn the power of the dog," went on the Arab. "You shall learn—as did that other one!"

With a sudden movement Benson flung himself forward on that tall veiled figure—but he clutched the empty air and fell, choking and gasping, his eyes and mouth full of hot sand. Utterly bewildered, he got to his knees, to find himself once more under that low-hung moon in the wilderness, among the tents and campfires of Daouad the Chief.

And then naked terror seized him. For again Daouad stood before the great brazier—his torturers in a ring about him—and within that circle of evil grinning faces he himself was hemmed.

"Deliver my soul from the power of the dog!" The words beat like a tattoo in Benson's brain. He knew now, too late to save himself, that such power was real—a blasting, devastating power that could destroy him, body and soul.

The chief pointed to him, and Benson strove desperately that he might not grovel before his enemy.

A pock-marked Arab tore the Englishman's coat from his back with slavering eagerness, and cruel fingers were at the collar of his shirt, when a swift, lean shape darted across the ring, and sprang at Daouad's throat.

"The yellow dog!" burst from Benson's dry lips, as he heard a choking, terrible cry, and the vast floor of the desert seemed to rise up around him. . . . Then he saw clearly again he was under the eucalyptus trees once more, his coat flung on the ground beside him, his shirt torn open at the throat; and before him, on the bridge, in the white moonlight, Daouad strove to fling off that savage, tawny shape hanging at his throat!

Inch by inch the Arab staggered back until he reeled against the light handrail of the bridge. It bent and broke with a report which rang out like a pistol shot, and man and dog fell into the deep water below.

Benson dragged himself forward, and peered down. He saw the two locked together, sink and rise, and sink again. Then, after a long interval, both rose once more to the surface, and began to float slowly down the stream.

He watched and saw how they drifted apart at last—Daouad was carried on in midstream, while the dog was drawn into the shallows and lay washing gently to and fro among the long reeds by the bank.

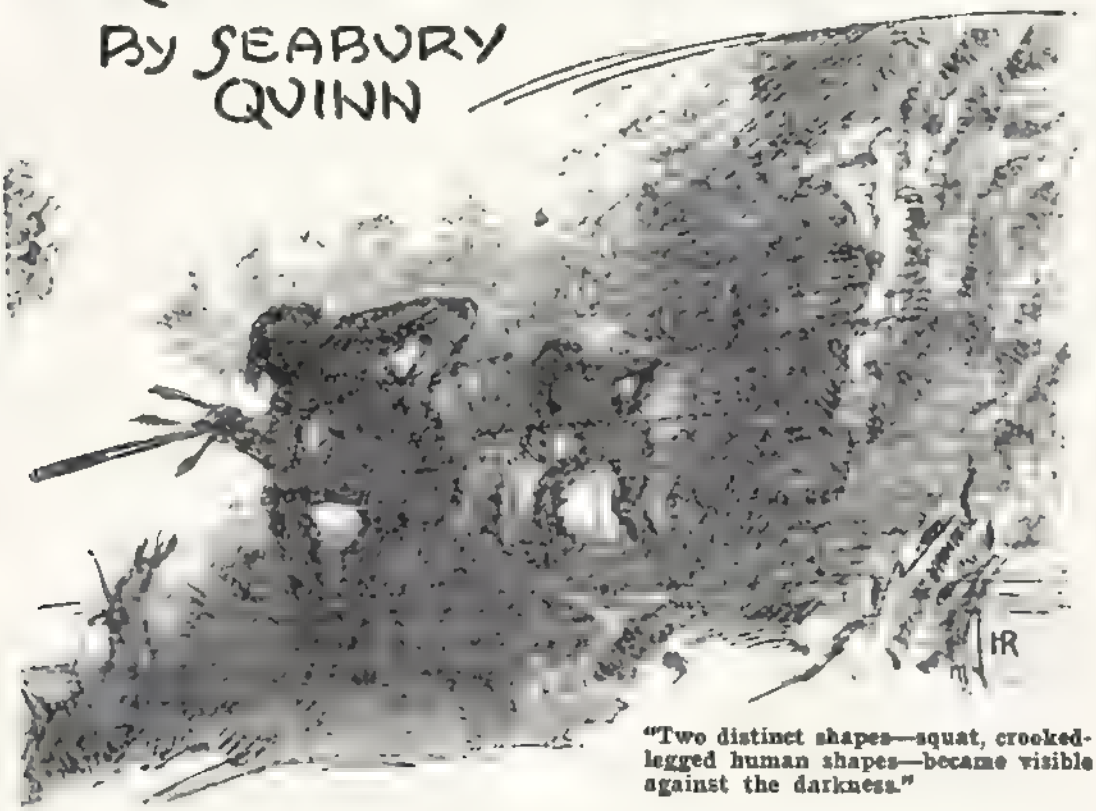
A quick impulse stirred Benson. He must at least give the animal a decent burial—not leave it like a drowned rat there in the water! Had it not been for the yellow dog——! He shivered, and ran quickly down to the river's brink and drew the dog to land. The dead body was wet and heavy, and Benson staggered as he carried it up to the road.

He put out a hand to shut its eyes—those staring glassy eyes! But he did not shut them—his hand fell to his side, and violent, nauseating horror, too great for brain and body to bear, overwhelmed him; and he pitched forward on his face in the road.

One eye of the yellow dog was blue as the lake of Kef-el-dour, the other black as Eblis.

CREEPING SHADOWS

By SEABURY QUINN



"Two distinct shapes—squat, crooked-legged human shapes—became visible against the darkness."

"*MON Dieu!* Is it that we are arrest'?" Jules de Grandin half rose from the dinner table in mock consternation as the vigorous ringing of the front door bell was followed by a heavy tramp in the hall, and Nora, my household factotum, ushered Detective Sergeant Costello and two uniformed policemen into the dining room.

"Not a bit of it," Costello negatived with a grin as he seated himself on the extreme forward edge of the chair I indicated and motioned the two patrolmen to seats beside him. "Not a bit of it, Dr. de Grandin, sor; but we're after askin' a favor of you, if you don't mind. This is Officer Callaghan"—he indicated the burly, red-headed policeman at his right—"an' this is Officer Schippert. Both good boys, sor, an' worthy to be believed, for I know 'em of old."

"I doubt it not," de Grandin acknowledged the introduction with one of his quick smiles, "those whom you vouch for are surely not to be despised, *mon vieux*. But this favor you would have of me, what of it?"

Detective Sergeant Costello clasped his black derby hat in a viselike grip between his knees and stared into its interior as though he expected to find inspiration there. "We're after wantin' some information in th' Craven case, if ye don't mind, sor," he replied.

"Eh, the Craven case?" de Grandin echoed. "*Parbleu,* old friend, I fear you have come to the wrong bureau of information. I know nothing of the matter except such tags of gossip as I have heard, and that is

little enough. Was it not that this Monsieur Craven, who lived alone by himself, was discovered dead in his front yard after having lain there in that condition for several days, and that there was evidence of neither struggle nor robbery? Am I right?"

"M'm," Costello mumbled. "They didn't tell ye nothin' about his head bein' cut off, then?"

An expression of almost tragic astonishment swept over the little Frenchman's face. "What is it that you say—he was beheaded?" he exclaimed incredulously. "*Mordieu,* why was I not informed of this? I had been told there was no evidence of struggle! Is it then that lonely gentlemen in America suffer the loss of their heads without struggling? Tell on, my friend. I burn, I am consumed with curiosity. What more of this so remarkable case where a man dies by decapitation and there is no sign of foul play? *Nom d'un raisin,* I am very wise, *cher sergent,* but it seems I have yet much to learn!"

"Well, sor," Costello began half apologetically, "I don't know why ye never heard about Craven's head bein' missin', unless th' coroner's office hustled th' body off too soon for th' folks to git wise. But that ain't th' strangest part of th' case; not by a dam' sight—askin' your pardon for th' expression, sor. Ye see, these boys here"—he indicated the officers, who nodded solemn confirmation of his remark before he uttered it—"these boys here have th' beat which goes past th' Craven house, an' they both of 'em swear they seen him in his front yard th' mornin' of th' very day he was found dead, *an' supposed to have been dead for several days when found!*

"Now, Dr. de Grandin, I'm just a police officer, an' Callaghan an' Schippert's just a pair o' harness bulls. We ain't had no eddycation, an' th' doctors at the coroner's office ought to know what they're talkin' about when they say th' putrefactive state of his body showed Craven had been dead several days; but just th' same——" He paused, casting a glance at his two blue-uniformed confreres.

"*Nom d'un bouc,* go on, man; go on!" de Grandin urged. "I starve for further details, and you withhold your story like a naughty little boy teasing a dog with a bit of meat! Proceed, I beseech you."

"Well, sor, as I was sayin'," the detective resumed, "I ain't settin' up to be no medical doctor, nor nothin' like that; but I'll take me Bible oath Mister Craven hadn't been dead no several days when they found him layin' in his garden. 'Twas early in th' mornin' of th' very day they found 'im I was walkin' past his house after bein' out most all night on a case, an' I seen him standin' in his front yard with me own two eyes, as plain as I see you this minute, sor. Callaghan an' Schippert, who was comin' off night juty, come past th' house not more'n a' hour afterward, an' they seen 'im standin' among th' flowers, too."

"Eh, you are sure of this?" de Grandin demanded, his little blue eyes snapping with interest.

"Positive," Costello returned. "Meself, I might a' seen a ghost, an' Callaghan might a' done th' same, for we're Irish, sor, an' th' hidden people show 'emselves to us when they don't bid th' time o' day to th' rest o' yez; but Schippert here, if he seen a banshee settin' on a murderer's grave, combin' her hair with th' shin-bone of a dead gipsy, he'd never give th' old gurrl a tumble unless her screechin' annoyed th' neighbors, an' then he'd tell her to shut up an' move on, or he'd run her in for disturbin' th' peace. So if Schippert says he seen Mr. Craven walkin' in his front garden half an hour after sun-up, why, Mr. Craven it were, sor, an' no ghost at all. I'll swear to that."

"*Morbleu,* and did you not tell the coroner as much at the inquisition?" de Grandin asked, producing a cigarette from his waistcoat pocket like a prestidigitator exhuming a rabbit from his trick hat, but forgetting to light it in his excitement. "Did you not inform *Monsieur le Coroneur* of this?"

"No, sor; we wasn't invited to th' inquest. I reported what I'd seen to headquarters when I heard they'd found Mr. Craven's body, an' Callaghan an' Schippert done th' same at their precinct, but all they said to us was 'Applesauce.' An' that was that, sor. Y'see, when we all three swore we'd seen th' man himself th' same mornin', an' th' doctors all swore he must a' been dead almost a week before he was found, they thought we was all cuckoo, an' paid us no more mind."

"*Nom d'un porc!* Did they so?" de Grandin barked. "They did tell you, my friend, that you spoke the sauce of the apple; *you,* who have assisted Jules de Grandin in more cases than one? *Mordieu,* it is the insult! I shall go to these *canaille;* I shall tell them to their foolish faces that they possess not the brain of a guinea-pig! I, Jules de Grandin, shall inform them——"

"Aisy, sor; go aisy, if ye please," Costello besought. " 'Twould do us more harm than good should ye cause hard feelin's agin us at th' coroner's office; but ye can be a big help to us in another way, if ye will."

"*Morbleu,* speak on, my friend, enlighten me," de Grandin agreed. "If there be a mystery to this case, and a mystery there surely is, have no fear that Jules de Grandin will sleep or eat or drink till it shall be explained!" He poured himself another cup of coffee and imbibed it in two huge gulps. "Lead on, *mon brave.* What is it that you would have me do?"

"Well, sor," the Irishman grinned with delight at de Grandin's enthusiastic acceptance of his suggestion, "we knew as how you'd had all sorts an' kinds o' experience with dead folks, an' we're wonderin' if mebbe you would go over to th' Craven house with us an' take a look round th' premises, sorter. Mebbe you'd be able to find out sumpin' that would make th' goin' aisier for us, for they're razzin' us sumpin' awful about sayin' we seen Mr. Craven several days after th' doctor says he was kilt, so they are. All th' same, no matter what they say at th' coroner's office," he added stubbornly, "a man that's well enough to be walkin' around his own front yard at half-past 4 in th' mornin' ain't goin' to be dead several days when he's found in th' same yard a few minutes after 4 o'clock th' same afternoon. That's what I say, an' Callaghan an' Schippert here says th' same."

"Sure do," Officers Callaghan and Schippert nodded solemn agreement.

"*Parbleu, mes amis,*" de Grandin agreed as he rose from the table, "I consider your logic irrefutable.

"Come, Trowbridge, my friend," he beckoned to me, "let us go to this house where men who died several days before—with their heads off, *parbleu!*—promenade their front yards." He held the door of my motor's tonneau courteously for the three officers, then vaulted nimbly to the front seat beside me. "Trowbridge, my old one," he whispered as I set the car in motion, "I damn think we shall have the beautiful adventure this night. Hasten, I would that it begins at once, right away."

THE Craven cottage stood in the center of a quarter-acre tract, a low hedge cutting it off from the old military road on which it faced, an eight-foot brick wall surrounding its other three sides. Though the front grounds were planted in a run-down garden, there were no trees near the

house, consequently we had an unobstructed view of the yard in the brilliant May moonlight.

"It was right here they found him," Officer Schippert volunteered, directing our attention to a bed of phlox which still bore the impression of some heavy weight. "He was standin' almost alongside this here flower bed when I seen him that mornin', an' he must a' fallen where he stood. I can't understand what—ouch! What th' devil's that?" He drew his hand suddenly back from the mass of flowering plants, grasping his forefinger in pain.

"Stick yerself, Schip?" Callaghan asked casually. "I didn't know them things had thorns on 'em."

"I'll say I stuck myself," Officer Schippert replied, displaying a long, pointed sliver of wood adhering to the skin of his finger. "This thing was layin' right amongst them flowers, an'—oh, my God! Callaghan, Costello, I'm goin' blind; I'm dyin'!" With an exclamation which was half grunt, half choke, he slid forward to the earth, his stalwart body crushing the flowers which had bent beneath the weight of Craven's headless corpse some forty-eight hours earlier.

"Howly Mither!" Sergeant Costello exclaimed as he bent over the prostrate figure of the policeman. "Dr. de Grandin, he *is* dead! See here, sor; his heart's stopped beatin'!"

De Grandin and I leaned forward, making a hasty inspection. Costello's diagnosis was all too true. The sturdy patrolman, vibrant with life two minutes before, was lifeless as the man whose body lay in the city morgue, "apparently dead for several days when found," according to medical testimony.

Costello and I picked our fallen comrade up and bore him into the empty house of death, and while I struck a match and applied it to a gas jet, de Grandin opened the dead policeman's blouse and made a closer examination.

"Look here, Dr. de Grandin," the sergeant announced, looking up from the dead man's face with the dry-eyed sorrow of a man whose daily duty it is to take desperate risks, "there's something devilish about this business. Look at his face! He's turnin' spotty a'ready! Why, you'd think he was dead a couple o' days, an' we only just carried him in here a minute ago."

De Grandin bent closer, examining the dead man's face, chest and arms attentively. "*Pardieu*, it may easily be so!" he murmured to himself, then aloud to Costello: "You are right, my friend. Do you and the good Callaghan go to the police bureau for an ambulance. Dr. Trowbridge and I will wait until they come for the—for your comrade. Meantime——" He broke off, gazing abstractedly about the combination living-dining room in which we stood, noting the odd ornaments on the mantel-shelf, the neatly arranged blue plates in the china closet, the general air of stiff, masculine housekeeping which permeated the apartment.

"*Parbleu*, Trowbridge, my friend," he commented as the policemen tiptoed out, "I think this matter will require much thinking over. Me, I do not like the way this poor one died, and I have less liking for the intelligence that Monsieur Craven's head was missing."

"But Craven must have been cut down by some fiend," I interposed, "while poor Schippert—well, how *did* he die, de Grandin?"

"Who can say?" he queried in his turn, tapping his teeth thoughtfully with the polished nail of his forefinger.

"Now, Jules de Grandin, great *tête de chou* that you are, what have you to say to this?" he apostrophized himself as he inspected the splinter

of wood which had scratched the dead policeman's hand. "That is what it is, undoubtlessly," he continued his monologue, "yes, *pardieu,* we do all know that, but why? Such things do not happen without reason, foolish one." He turned to the chest of drawers beneath the kitchen dresser and began ransacking it as methodically as though he were a burglar intent on looting the place.

"Ah? What have we here?" he demanded as a heavy package, securely wrapped in muslin, came to light. "Perhaps it is a plate——" He bore the parcel to the unpainted kitchen table and began undoing the nautical knots with which its wrappings were fastened. "*Morbleu,*" he laid back the last layer of cloth, "it *is* a plate, Friend Trowbridge. And such a plate! Men have died for less —*cordieu,* I think men have died for *this,* unless I am more mistaken than I think."

Under the flickering gaslight there lay a disk of yellow metal some thirteen or fourteen inches in diameter, its outer edge decorated with a row of small, oblong ornaments, like a border of dominoes, an inner circle, three inches or so smaller than the plate's perimeter, serving as a frame for the bas-relief figure of a dancing man crowned with a feather headdress and brandishing a two-headed spear in one hand and a hook-ended war-club in the other.

"It is gold, my friend," he breathed almost reverently. "Solid, virgin gold, hammered by hand a thousand years ago, if a day. Pure Mayan it is, from Chichen-Itzá or Uxmal, and worth its weight in diamonds."

"U'm, perhaps," I agreed doubtfully, "but nothing you've said means anything to me."

"No matter," he retorted shortly. "Let us see—ah, what have we here?" In a corner of the small open fireplace, innocent of any trace of ash or cinder, lay a tiny wisp of charred paper. Darting forward he retrieved the bit of refuse and spread it before him on the table.

"Um'm?" he muttered non-committally, staring at the relic as though he expected it to speak.

The paper had been burned to a crisp and had curled up on itself with the action of the flame, but the metallic content of the ink in which its message had been scribbled had bleached to a dark, leaden gray, several shades lighter than the carbonized surface of the note itself.

"*Regardez vous,* my friend," he commanded, taking a pair of laboratory tweezers from his dinner-coat pocket and straightening the paper slightly with a careful pressure. "Can not you descry words on this so black background?"

"No—yes!" I replied, looking over his shoulder and straining my eyes to the utmost.

"*Bien,* we shall read it together," he responded. "Now to begin:"

"*ar al,*" we spelled out laboriously, as he turned the charred note gingerly to and fro beneath the lambent light. "*red ils av ot Murphy. Lay low an*——" the rest of the message was lost in the multitude of heat-wrinkles on the paper's blackened surface.

"*Mordieu,* but this is too bad!" he exclaimed when our united efforts to decipher further words proved fruitless. "There is no date, no signature, no anything. *Hélas,* we stand no nearer an answer to our puzzle than at first!"

He lighted one of his evil-smelling French cigarettes and took several lung-filling, thoughtful puffs, then threw the half-smoked tube into the fireplace and began rewrapping the golden plate. "My friend," he informed me, his little blue eyes twinkling with sardonic laughter, "I lie. A moment since I did declare we were still at sea, but now I think we are, like Columbus, in sight of land.

Moreover, again like Columbus, I think it is the coast of Central America which we do sight. Behold, we have established the motive for Monsieur Craven's murder, and we know how it was accomplished. There now remains only to ascertain who this Monsieur Murphy was and who inscribed this note of warning to the late Monsieur Craven."

"Well," I exclaimed impatiently, "I'm glad you've found out why and how Craven was killed. All I've seen here tonight is a policeman's tragic death and a silly-looking plate from Uxbridge, or some other absurd place."

He produced another cigarette and felt thoughtfully through his pockets for a match. "Those who know not what they see ofttimes see nothing, my friend," he returned with a sarcastic smile. "Come, let us go out into the air. This place—pah!—it has the reek of death on it."

We waited at the front gate until Costello and Callaghan arrived with the police ambulance. As the litter-bearers passed us on their grisly errand, de Grandin leaned from my car and whispered to Costello. "Tomorrow night, *cher sergent*. Perhaps we shall come to the end of the riddle then, and apprehend those who slew your friend, as well."

"Can ye, now, doctor?" the Irishman returned eagerly. "By gorry, I'll be present with bells—an' a couple o' guns—on if ye can trace th' murderin' devil for me."

"*Très bien,*" de Grandin assented. "Meet us at Dr. Trowbridge's house about 8 o'clock, if you please."

"Now, what's it all mean?" I demanded as I turned the car toward home. "You're as mysterious as a magician at the county fair. Come, out with it!"

"Listen, my friend," he bade. "The wise man who thinks he knows whereof he speaks retains silence until his thought becomes a certainty. Me, I have wisdom. Much experience has given it to me. Let us say no more of this matter until we have ascertained light on certain things which are yet most dark. Yes."

"But——"

"Je suis le roi de ces montagnes . . ."

he sang in high good humor, nor could all my threats or entreaties make him say one word more concerning the mystery of Craven's death, or Schippert's, or the queer, golden plate we found in the deserted house.

"*BON soir, sergent,*" de Grandin greeted as Costello entered the study shortly after 9 o'clock the following evening. "We have awaited you with impatience."

"Have ye, now?" the Irishman replied. "Sure, it's too bad entirely that I've delayed th' party, but I've had th' devil's own time gettin' here this night. All sorts o' things have been poppin' up, sor."

"*Eh bien,* perhaps we shall pop up something more before the night is ended," the Frenchman returned. "Come, let us hasten; we have much to do before we seek our beds."

"All right," Costello agreed as he prepared to follow, "where are we goin', if I may ask?"

"Ah, too many questions spoil the party of surprize, my friend," de Grandin answered with a laugh as he led the way to the car.

"Do you know the Rugby Road, Friend Trowbridge?" he asked as he climbed into the front seat beside me.

"Uh, yes," I replied without enthusiasm. The neighborhood he mentioned was in a suburb at the extreme east end of town, not at all noted for its odor of sanctity. Frankly, I had not much stomach for driving out there after dark, even with Sergeant Costello for company, but de Grandin gave me no time for temporizing.

"*Bien,*" he replied enthusiastically. "You will drive us there with all celerity, if you please, and pause when I give the signal. Come, my friend; haste, I pray you. Not only may we save another life—we may apprehend those assassins who did Craven and the poor Schippert to death."

"All right," I agreed grudgingly, "but I'm not very keen on it."

Half an hour's run brought us to the winding, tree-shaded trail known as Rugby Road, a thoroughfare of broken pavements, tumbledown houses and wide spaces of open, uncultivated fields. At a signal from my companion I brought up before the straggling picket fence of a deserted-looking cottage, and the three of us swarmed out and advanced along the grass-choked path leading to the ruinous front stoop.

"I'm thinkin' we've had our ride for our pains, sor," Costello asserted as de Grandin's third imperative knock brought no response from beyond the weather-scarred door.

"Not we," the Frenchman denied, increasing both tempo and volume of his raps. "There is someone here, of a certainty, and here we shall stand until we receive an answer."

His persistence was rewarded, for a shuffling step finally sounded beyond the panels, and a cautious voice demanded haltingly, "Who's there?"

"*Parbleu,* friend, you are over long in honoring the presence of those who come to aid you!" de Grandin complained with testy irrelevancy. "Have the kindness to open the door."

"Who's there?" the voice repeated, this time with something like a tremor in it.

"*Nom d'un homard!*" the Frenchman ejaculated. "What does it matter what names we bear? We are come to help you escape 'the red devils'—those same demons who did away with Murphy and Craven. Quick, open, for the time is short!"

The man inside appeared to be considering de Grandin's statement, for there was a brief period of silence, then the sound of bolts withdrawing and a chain-lock being undone. "Quick—step fast!" the voice admonished as the door swung inward a scant ten inches without disclosing the person behind it. Next moment we stood in a dimly lighted hallway, surveying a perspiring little man in tattered pajamas and badly worn carpet slippers. He was an odd-looking bit of humanity, undersized, thin almost to the point of emaciation, with small, deep-sunken eyes set close together, a head almost denuded of hair and a mouth at once weak and vicious. I conceived an instant dislike for him, nor was my regard heightened by his greeting.

"What do you know about 'the red devils'?" he demanded truculently, regarding us with something more than suspicion. "If you're in cahoots with 'em——" he placed his hand against the soiled front of his jacket, displaying the outline of a revolver strapped to his waist.

"*Ah bah,* Deacons," de Grandin advised, "be not an utter fool. Were we part of their company, you know how much safety the possession of that toy would afford. Murphy was an excellent shot, so was Craven, but"—he waved an expressive hand—"what good were all their weapons?"

"None, by God!" the other answered with a shudder. "But what's a little pip squeak like you goin' to be able to do to help me?"

"*Morbleu*—a pip squeak—*I?*" The diminutive Frenchman bristled like a bantam game-cock, then interrupted himself to ask, "Why do you barricade yourself like this? Think you to escape in that way?"

"What d'ye want me to do?" the other replied sullenly. "Go out an' let 'em fill me full o'——"

"*Tiens,* the chances are nine to one

that they will get you in any case," de Grandin cut in cheerfully. "We have come to offer you the tenth chance, my friend. Now attend me carefully: Have you a cellar beneath this detestable ruin of a house, and has it a floor of earth?"

"Huh? Yes," the other replied, looking at the Frenchman as though he expected him to proclaim himself Emperor of China with his next breath. "What of it?"

"*Parbleu,* much of it, stupid one! Quick, make haste, repair instantly to the cellar and bring me a panful of earth. Be swift, the night is too hot for us to remain long baking in this hell-hole of yours."

"Lookee here——" the other began, but de Grandin shut him off.

"Do as I bid!" he thundered, his little eyes blazing fiercely. "At once, right away, immediately, or we leave you to your fate. *Cordieu,* am I not Jules de Grandin? I will be obeyed!"

With surprizing meekness our host descended to the cellar and struggled up the rickety stairs in a few minutes, a dishpan full of clayey soil from the unpaved floor in his hands.

"*Bien!*" De Grandin carried the earth to the kitchen sink and proceeded to moisten it with water from the tap, then began kneading it gently with his long, tapering fingers.

"Do you seat yourself between me and the light, my friend," he commanded, looking up from his work to address Deacons. "I would have a clear-cut view of your profile."

"Sa-a-ay——" the other began protestingly.

"Here, now, you, do what Dr. de Grandin tells ye, or I'll mash ye to a pulp," Costello cut in, evidently feeling he had already taken too little part in the proceedings. "Turn your ugly mug, now, like he tells ye, or I'll be turnin' it for ye, an' turnin' it so far ye'll have to walk backwards to see where ye're goin', too."

Under Costello's chaperonage Deacons sat sullenly while de Grandin deftly punched and pounded the mass of soggy clay into a rough simulacrum of his nondescript profile. "*Parbleu,* Trowbridge, my friend," he remarked with a grin, "when I was a lad studying at the Beaux Arts and learning I should never make an artist, little did I think I should one day apply such little skill as I absorbed in modeling such a *cochon* as that"—he indicated Deacons with a disdainful nod—"in earth scooped from his own cellar floor! *Eh bien,* he who tracks a mystery does many strange things before he reaches his trail's end, *n'est-ce-pas?*

"Now, then," he gave the clay a final scrape with his thumb, "let us consider the two of you. Be so good as to stand beside my masterpiece, *Monsieur,*" he waved an inviting hand to his model and strode across the room to get a longer perspective on his work.

Deacons complied, still muttering complainingly about "fellers that comes to a man's house an' orders 'im about like he was a bloomin' servant."

The Frenchman regarded his handiwork through narrowed eyelids, turning his head first one side, then the other. Finally he gave a short grunt of satisfaction. "*Ma foi,*" he looked from Costello to me, then back to Deacons and the bust. "I think I have bettered the work of *le bon Dieu.* Surely my creation from earth does flatter His. Is it not so, my friends?"

"Sure, it is," Costello commended, "but if it ain't askin' too much, I'd like to know what's th' idea o' all th' monkey business?"

De Grandin wiped the clay from his hands on the none-too-clean towel which hung from a nail in the kitchen door. "We are about to demonstrate the superiority of Aryan culture to the heathen in his blindness," he replied.

"Are we, now?" Costello answered. "Sure, that's fine. When do we start?"

"Now, immediately, right away. Deacons"—he turned curtly to our host—"do you smoke a pipe? Habitually? *Bien.* You will put your pipe in that image's mouth, if you please. Careful, I do not wish my work spoiled by your clumsiness. Good." He regarded the image a thoughtful moment, then drawled to himself. "And—now—ah, *pardieu,* the very thing!" Seizing a roll of clothesline from the corner of the room he made it fast to a leg of the table on which the statuette rested, then began dragging it slowly toward him.

"Once more I would have your so generous criticism, *Sergent,*" he requested of Costello. "Will you stand in the doorway, there, and observe the statue as it passes the light? Does its outline resemble the profile of our handsome friend yonder?"

"It does," the policeman asserted after a careful inspection through half-closed eyes. "If I seen it at fifty foot or so in a bad light I'd think it were th' man himself, mebbe."

"Good, fine, excellent," de Grandin replied. "Those are the precise conditions under which I propose exhibiting my work to the audience I doubt not waits to examine it. *Parbleu,* we must hope their sense of artistic appreciation is not too highly developed. Trowbridge, *mon vieux,* will you assist me with the table? I would have it in the next room, please."

When we had placed the table some five feet from the living room window which overlooked the cottage's shabby side yard, de Grandin turned to Costello and me, his face tense with excitement. "Let us steal to the back door, my friends," he directed, "and you, *Sergent,* do you have your pistol ready, for it may be that we shall have quick and straight shooting to do before we age many minutes.

"Deacons," he turned at the doorway, speaking with a sharp, rasping note of command in his voice, "do you seat yourself on the floor, out of sight from the window, and draw the table toward you slowly with that rope when you hear my command. Slowly, my friend, mind you; about the pace a man might walk if he were in no hurry. Much depends upon your exact compliance with my orders. Now——"

Tiptoeing to the window, he seized the sliding blind, ran it up to its full height, then unbarred the shutters, flinging them wide, and dodged nimbly back from the window's opening.

"*Sergent*—Trowbridge!" he whispered tensely. "Attention; let us go; *allons!* Be ready," he flung the command to Deacons over his shoulder as he slipped from the room, "begin drawing in the rope when you hear the back door open!"

Silently as a trio of ghosts we stole out into the moonless, humid night, skirted the line of the house wall, and crouched in the shadow of a dilapidated rain-barrel.

"D'ye think annyone will——" Costello began in a hoarse whisper, but:

"*S-s-sh!*" de Grandin shut him off. "Observe, my friends; look yonder!"

A clump of scrub maple and poplar grew some forty feet from the house, and as we obeyed the Frenchman's imperative nod, a portion of the dense shadow thrown by the trees appeared to detach itself from the surrounding gloom and drift slowly toward the lighted window across which the crudely modeled bust of Deacons was being pulled.

"Careful, my friends; no noise!" de Grandin warned, so low the syllables were barely audible above the murmuring night noises. The drifting shadow was joined by another, the two merging into one

almost imperceptible blot of blackness.

Nearer, still nearer the creeping patch of gloom approached, then, with the suddenness of a wind-driven cloud altering shape, the ebon blotch changed from horizontal to vertical, two distinct shapes—squat, crooked-legged human shapes—became visible against the darkness of the night's background, and a wild, eery, blood-curdling yell rent the heavy, grass-scented air.

Two undersized, screaming shapes ran wildly toward the dimly lit window, but Detective Sergeant Costello was quicker than they. "I've got ye, ye murderin' devils!" he roared, leaping from his ambush and flourishing his revolver. "Stick up your paws, or I'll make a fly-net out o' th' pair of yez!"

"Down—down, fool!" de Grandin shrieked despairingly, as he strove futilely to drag the big Irishman back into the shadow.

He gave up the attempt and leaped forward with lithe, catlike grace, interposing himself between the detective and the shadowy forms. Something shone dimly in the night's starless air, two flashes of intense, orange flame spurted through the darkness, and the twin roar of a French army pistol crashed and reverberated against the house wall.

The racing shadows halted abruptly in their course, seemed to lean together an instant, to merge like a mass of vapor jostled by the wind, then slumped suddenly downward and lay still.

"Blessed St. Patrick!" Costello murmured, turning the prostrate forms over, inspecting the gaping wounds torn by de Grandin's soft-nosed bullets with a sort of pathetic awe. "That's what I call some shootin', Dr. de Grandin, sor. I knew ye was a clever little devil—askin' your pardon—but——"

"*Parbleu,* my friend, when shooting is necessary, I shoot," de Grandin replied complacently. "But we have other things of more importance to observe, if you please. Turn your flashlight here, if you will."

Sharply silhouetted against the circle of brilliance cast by the electric torch were two slender, thornlike splinters of wood, their hard, pointed tips buried to a depth of a quarter-inch in the clapboard's crumbling surface.

"It was such as these which killed Craven and Comrade Schippert," the Frenchman explained shortly. "Had I not fired when I did, these"—he pointed gingerly to the thorns—"would have been in you, my friend, and you, I doubt not, would have been in heaven. *Morbleu,* as it was, I did despair of drawing you back before they had pierced you with their darts, and *le bon Dieu* knows I shot not a moment too soon!"

"But—howly Mither!—what th' devil is it, annyway, sor?" the big detective demanded in a fever of mystification.

De Grandin blew methodically down the barrel of his pistol to clear the smoke fumes away before restoring the weapon to his shoulder holster. "They are darts, my friend. Arrows from blowguns—arrows of sure and certain death, for with them every hit is a fatal one. In South and Central America the Indians use them in blowguns for certain classes of hunting, and sometimes in war, and when they blow one of them into a jaguar, fierce and tenacious of life as the great cat is, he dies before he can fall from his tree to the earth. Beside the venom in which these darts are steeped the poison of the cobra or the rattlesnake is harmless as water.

"But come"—he turned again toward the house—"let us go in. Me, I think I have all this sad and sordid story by heart, but there is certain information I would get from the excellent Deacons, before we write the last chapter.

"Now, *Monsieur,*" de Grandin leveled his unwinking, steel-hard stare at the little man cowering in the cottage's shabby living room, "you have spent much time in Central America, I take it. You and your compatriots, Murphy and Craven, were grave-robbers, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

"Huh? What's that?" Costello interrupted incredulously. "Grave-robbers, did ye say, sor? Stiff-stealers?"

"*Non, non,*" the Frenchman returned with a quick smile, then turned a stern face toward Deacons. "Not stealers of corpses, my friend, but stealers of treasure. *Morbleu,* do I not know their ilk? But of course. My friends, I was with de Lesseps when he strove to consummate the wedding of the Atlantic with the Pacific at Panama. I was for a time with the French engineers when Diaz drove the railway across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and in that time I learned much of gentry such as these. In all Central America there is great store of gold and silver and turquoise buried in the graveyards and ruined cities of the native peoples whom the pig-ignorant Spaniards destroyed in their greed for gold and power. Today brave men of science do risk their lives that these priceless relics of a forgotten people may be brought to light, and fellows such as Deacons and his two dead partners hang about the headquarters of exploring parties waiting for them to map the course to the ancient ruins, then rush in and steal each scrap of gold on which they can lay their so unclean hands. They are vandals more vile than the Spaniards who went before them, for they steal not only from the dead, but from the treasure-house of science as well."

"We didn't do nothin' worse than th' highbrows did," Deacons defended sullenly. "You never heard of us tryin' to alibi ourselves by claimin' to be workin' for some university, 'stead o' bein' just plain thieves. Them scientists are just as bad as we was, on'y they was *gentlemen,* an' could git away with their second-story work."

"About ten years ago," de Grandin went on as if Deacons had not spoken, "this fellow, together with Craven, Murphy and three others, stumbled on the ruins of an old Mayan city in Yucatan. Only the good God knows how they found it, but find it they did, and with it they found a perfect El Dorado of golden relics.

"The local Indians—poor, ignorant, oppressed wretches—had lost all knowledge of their once so splendid ancestors, and retained nothing of the ancient Mayan culture but a few perverted legends and a deep, idolatrous veneration for the ruins of their vanished forebears' sacred cities. When they beheld Deacons and his companions pawing over the bodies in the tombs, kicking the skeletons about as though they were but rubbish, and snatching frantically at anything and everything with the glint of gold upon it—*cordieu,* how many priceless pieces of copal and obsidian these so ignorant ignoramuses must have thrown away!—they swooped down on the camp and the robbers had to shoot their way to freedom. Three of them were slain, but three of them escaped and won through to the coast. They made their way back to this country with their booty and——"

"Say"—Deacons looked at the Frenchman as a bird might regard a serpent—"how'd you find all this out?"

"*Parbleu,* my friend," the other smiled tolerantly, "Jules de Grandin is not to be fooled by such as you!

"*Sergent*"—he turned again to Costello—"while you and Callaghan did seek the ambulance to bear away the body of poor Schippert last night,

Friend Trowbridge and I investigated the house where Monsieur Craven died. It was not hard for us to see the place was one occupied by a man much used to living alone and being his own servant in all ways—a sailor, perhaps, or a man much accustomed to the out-of-the-way places of the world. That was the first domino with which we had to begin building.

"Now, when we came to examine his *table de cuisine* we did find an ancient Mayan plate engraved with an effigy of a priest in full sacrificial regalia. This plate was the only thing of its kind among the dead man's effects and was carefully wrapped in a cotton rag. Evidently he had retained it as a souvenir. Those who knew not the goldsmithing trade in ancient Central America might easily have mistaken the plate for a piece of Oriental brass; but I, who know many things, realized it was of solid, unalloyed gold, intrinsically worth from five to seven thousand dollars, perhaps, but priceless from the anthropologist's standpoint.

" 'Now,' I ask me, 'what would a man like this Monsieur Craven, comfortably off, but not rich, be doing with such a relic among his things unless he himself had brought it from Yucatan?'

" 'Nothing,' I say to me.

" 'Quite right,' I reply. 'Jules de Grandin, you do not make mistakes.'

"Also there was the coroner's report that this Monsieur Deadman had been dead for several days when he was found, and your piece of intelligence that his head have disappeared. Also, again, we know from you and the other officers that he had *not* been dead several days, but only several hours when discovered. What is the answer to that?

"*Hélas*, we found it out only through your poor friend's death! Officer Schippert had pricked himself on what he thought was a thorn—so much like thorns do these accursed darts look that the police and coroner's attachés might have seen that one a thousand times, yet never recognized it for what it was. But our poor friend was wounded by it, and almost at once he died.

"Now, what was such a dart as this doing in the Craven yard? Why did the poor Schippert have to scratch himself on a thing which should not have been in existence in that latitude and longitude? It is to seek the answer.

"We carried Schippert into the house, and what do we see? Almost at once he had begun to become *livide*—discolored. Yes. I have seen men shot with such arrows while I worked under the tropic sun, I had handled those splinters of death, and had seen the corpses assume the appearance of the long dead almost as I watched them. When I saw the appearance of the poor Schippert, and beheld the dart by which he died, I say to me, 'This is the answer. This is why the physicians at the coroner's office declare that my friend, the good Costello, speaks words of foolishness when he insists Craven was not long dead when found.' Yes.

"Also, you have told me of the missing head. I know from experience and hearsay that those Indians do take the heads of their enemies as your Apaches once took the scalps of theirs, and preserve them as trophies. Everything points one way.

"You see, we have these parts of our puzzle"—he checked the facts off on his fingers—"a man who brought a golden plate from Yucatan is found dead in his front yard. He is undoubtlessly the victim of an Indian blowgun dart, for his appearance and the dart which we have found too late to save the poor Schippert, all say so. Very good. No one knew anything about him, but he was apparently of those fortunate ones who can live in some comfort without working. From

this I reason he might once have possessed other Indian gold which he has sold.

"Now, while I think of these things, I notice a piece of burned paper in his fireplace, and on it I read these fragments of words:

ar al red ils av ot Murphy. Lay low an . . .

"What does it mean?

"I think some more, and decide what was written originally was:

Dear Pal: The red devils have got Murphy. Lay low and . . .

"Who are these 'red devils'? Because an Indian dart have killed both Craven and Schippert, must we not assume they are Indians? I think so. Most likely they were natives of Yucatan who had shipped as sailors on some tramp steamer and come to this land to wreak vengeance on those who despoiled their sacred cities and burying places. I have observed instances of such before. In Paris we have known of it, for there is no sort of crime with which the face of man is blackened which has not been at least once investigated by the *Service de Sûreté.*

"Now, from all this, it was most apparent the writer of this burned note had been warning Craven that one Murphy had been translated to another—though probably not a better—world, and that Craven must lie low, or he would doubtless share the same fate. So much is plain; *but who was Murphy, and who had written the warning?*

"I decided to shoot at the only target in sight. Next day I interviewed Dr. Symington, of the New York Museum of Natural History, asking him if he remembered Mayan relics being bought from a man named Craven or Murphy, or from anyone who mentioned any of those names in his conversation.

"A desperate chance, you say? But certainly. Yet it was by taking desperate chances that we turned back the *sale boche;* it was by taking desperate chances that the peerless Wright brothers learned to fly; it was by taking a desperate chance that I, Jules de Grandin, triumphed!

"Friend Symington had heard such names. Eight years ago one Michael Murphy had sold the Museum a small piece of Mayan jewelry, a little statuette of hammered rose-gold. He had boasted of exploits in Central America when he obtained this statue, told how he, together with Arthur Craven and Charles Deacons, had a fortune in bullion within their grasp, only to lose it when the outraged Indians attacked their camp and killed three of their companions. And that he spoke truth there was small doubt, for so greatly did he fear the Indian vengeance that he refused an offer of five thousand dollars and expenses to guide a party from the Museum to the place where he found the Indian gold.

"Very good. We have got the answer to our questions: 'Whom have the "red devils" gotten?' and 'Who wrote the warning letter to Craven?'

"But where is this Charles Deacons? In the directory of this city there are three of him listed, but only one of him is labeled as retired, and it was to him I looked for further light. I assume the Deacons I seek lives, as Craven did, on the proceeds of his thefts. I further assume he goes in deadly fear of the Indians' flying vengeance by day and by night. I find his address here, and"—he waved his hand in a gesture of finality—"here we come. *Voilà!*"

I started to put a question, but Costello was before me.

"How did ye know th' murderin' heathens would be here tonight, Dr. de Grandin?" he demanded.

"*Eh bien,* by elimination, of course," the Frenchman replied in high good humor. "Three men were

sought by the Indians. Two of them had already been disposed of, therefore, unless Deacons had already fallen to their flying death, they still remained in the vicinity, awaiting a chance to execute him. We found him alive, hence we knew they had still one-third of their task to perform. So I did bait our trap with Deacons' dummy, for well I knew they would shoot their poisoned darts at him the moment they saw his shadow pass the lighted open window. *Morbleu,* my friend, how near your own foolish courage came to making you, instead, their victim!"

"Thanks to you, sor, I'm still alive an kickin'," Costello acknowledged. "Shall I be ringin' th' morgue wagon for th' fellies ye shot, sor?"

"I care not," de Grandin responded indifferently, "dispose of them as you will."

"Well, say"—Deacons suddenly seemed to emerge from his trance, and advanced toward de Grandin, his lean hand extended—"I cert'ny got to thank you for pullin' me out of a mighty tight hole, sir."

De Grandin took no notice of the proffered hand. "*Pardieu, Monsieur,*" he responded coldly, "it was from no concern for you that I undertook this night's work. Those Indians had slain a friend of my friend, Sergeant Costello. I came not to save you, but to execute the murderers. You were but the stinking goat with which our tiger-trap was baited."

Lake Desolation

By LEAVENWORTH MACNAB

Wan waves lap listlessly the shape-wrapped shore,
Where barren rocks rear shapeless, cold and gray;
Dead-wind echoes make monotonous roar
Amid the sullen, gruesome caves aplay,
Rousing the ghosts of secrets long since dead.

Pale starshine, pure and passionless, looks down
From out her hazy veil, like silvered snow,
Lending her pallid radiance to crown
The desolation broadcast strown below—
Drear desolation, meet but for the dead.

Athwart the pulseless tide a bird of night—
Spirit, perchance, of what trod once as man—
Circles the gloom for aye in aimless flight,
Returning ever where it first began,
Piercing the stillness with weird notes of wo.

The fenlands rank pour forth their pungent breath—
Poisonous breath with deadly agues fraught—
Whose phosphorescent light, a wraith of death,
Woos wanderers will-o'-the-wisplike to the spot.
Here echoe, too, the night bird's notes of wo.

FLY ISLAND

by B WALLIS

"Haynes aimed a blow at something that swooped with great wings vibrating, and filling the air with a frightful, menacing resonance."

"LOOKS good to me!" said Haynes, the taller of the two men who had just run their little craft into the sheltered cove.

"Me for the hay this night!" agreed Manton with hearty satisfaction.

Three days had elapsed since they, sole survivors and once proud owners, had abandoned the *Tahuana* with its back broken on an uncharted reef somewhere south of the Solomons. For the hurricane that had licked into its maw their crew of three Trobiand "boys" had also left the *Tahuana* dismasted, a helpless wreck to drift in a dead calm to the one spot in that lonely waste where pink coral and surging seas would seal its fate.

By a twist of ironical fortune one small boat had come unscathed through the storm, and in this the partners had at once deserted the ruin of their hopes and many a hard-earned dollar. A desperate chance, but their only one, and this was not the first by many a one of desperate chances calmly taken and in their passing forgotten.

For two monotonous days they had in turn steadily sculled on a compass course—somewhat indefinite of determined goal, as was their point of departure—northward to the Solomons and Bougainville; the nearest approach to civilization, though almost certainly across four hundred miles of seldom-traversed waters. For two days not a breath had stirred the stagnant molten air, but on the morning of the third, nature quickened and from a rapturously hailed catspaw it quickly freshened to a brisk breeze; toward noon it stiffened and a

nasty chop commenced to lift, and before long ceaseless bailing alone stayed their foundering. Then into the horizon had popped this solitary island. Some hours later, and only in the nick of time, they had staggered into the sheltered cove.

As they had seen from afar, no mere surf-drenched atoll this: instead stood an odd-shaped boss of reddish rock, rounded and of easy slope save at its naked riven summit where steep jagged crags shot up abruptly to some five hundred feet above the beach they trod. Betwixt sea and summit lay a half-mile breadth of palm and sturdy undergrowth, and beyond, though now invisible, rose the rounded grassy shoulders ascending to the crown of ragged bluffs.

"Nuts, shade and water," grunted Manton, appreciatively eyeing a little rill that spilled through the greenery almost to their feet.

"It's a peach," affirmed Haynes. "After that damned two-by-four cockleshell," he added with a mariner's inborn grouch for the minor discomforts and indifference to the major perils of his calling.

By now the sun was near to setting, so they hastened about their simple preparations for the night.

"This," said Manton after supper, slowly puffing clouds of rank sweet smoke from his bearded lips, "is what I call real comfort."

"My oath!" said Haynes with laconic contentment.

Their slumber was untroubled and sound as befitted men whose flesh for two nights had endured the bruising ribs of a craft no larger than a pleasure skiff on the Hudson.

"Say, what's the rush?" queried Haynes thoughtfully as, breakfast over, they sat whittling black trade plugs for the morning rite. "I reckon a day's rest and another such doss will set us up for the stretch to Bougainville."

"I dunno—well, we don't lose nothing, that's a fact," growled Manton with a wry twist of lip at the thought of their shattered fortunes. Truly what matter a day more or less to destitute castaways whose only prospect was a dreary beggary on the beach of Bougainville until some vessel, undermanned, contemptuously shipped them?

So the matter was settled, and for a little they lay smoking, until the sun invaded their retreat. Then they rose and with a sudden boyish curiosity wandered off into the shade of the green wall almost encircling them.

That the island might be inhabited appeared improbable, as some keen eye would certainly have noted their approach and landing, and before this have gleamed with pleasure or suspicion upon the castaways.

Though the bush proved dense, yet it was by no means impassable, the stems standing in clumps of straight and pliant texture. But underfoot the way was littered with mossy boulders and pitted with hollows that the shade of the green matted roof almost veiled, even though the tropic sun flamed above. Idly prying here and there they made their way slowly through the scrub, loth to leave the shade, though here the air was dead and stifling. Shortly the thinning of the growths and streaks of garish light ahead announced the naked rising slopes beyond.

"It's hot—shade or sun," growled Manton.

"Sure," agreed Haynes indifferently, his lean hard flesh less troubled than his great-thewed partner. "But shucks, it's—— Hell! what's that?" he suddenly exclaimed in surprize.

"That" needed no close scrutiny, though the unexpectedness and nature of the object his foot had dislodged from the decay and trailing vines underfoot and sent hurtling awkwardly a pace ahead was the last thing their somewhat unimaginative

minds were that moment expecting. For human skulls are neither gracious in themselves nor indigenous to uninhabited islands.

"Well, I'm damned!—a skull!" said Manton slowly and with profound conviction, as though he voiced a prolonged and expert investigation.

"Sure it's a skull. But what is it—white or nigger?" queried his partner impatiently.

"White and no error!" announced Manton, stepping up and turning over the grimy globular thing with his foot. "Never a nigger with a head and jaw like that," he added, stating a simple fact, for the yellowed bone when clothed in flesh must have possessed markedly Caucasian features of uncommon virility.

"Yes, he's white all right—look here!" said Haynes, who on his knees was raking amid the litter and had quickly exposed a raffle of mold-encrusted bones and as he spoke held out a small, curiously hollowed object that shone with a dull glow of unmistakable nature. He rubbed it and held it up to his partner. It was gold, a replica of the human jaw done in gold, with teeth so even and perfect that art had but rendered itself nauseating.

"False teeth—a plate—well, I'm damned!" exclaimed Manton, eyeing the thing with surprize and dislike. "But what the devil was a lone white man doing here? I suppose he was alone," he added.

"Likely—guess some poor guy wrecked like ourselves—took sick maybe," said Haynes slowly and not unfeelingly; and without further discussion they set to rummaging again.

But here the soil was damp and sticky, for it was a little hollow into which moisture percolated from the near-by tiny creek. So whatever the garments of the unknown had been, now they were rotted into the encasing mire and all they garnered was the horn handle of a sheath-knife, a belt buckle, some silver coins and two flat strips of rubber—shoe soles—and that was all, until Manton made the great discovery. Kicked the stuff from its rotting bed as he shuffled his feet some paces away and some small oval lumps appeared and rolled sluggishly to one side. Picking up one of these he examined it, but with no great interest, until suddenly his face grew startled and alert and rapidly he cleansed the thing—by the simple process of wiping it across his stained pants. Then with a hand that slightly trembled he raised it to his nose and sniffed with intent deliberation, while Haynes, catching the action, watched him curiously.

"It's O. K.! It's the real stuff!" he announced solemnly, though his suppressed emotion was very obvious.

"What's the noise about?" queried Haynes blankly.

"Take a squint at it—there's something for sore eyes!" announced Manton almost in a shout.

What Haynes saw as his partner thrust the grimy object upon him was a rough rounded lump rather larger than a hen's egg, gray-white in hue and soaplike in texture, and entirely uninteresting, though certainly curious.

"Looks like the soap we used as kids back home," remarked Haynes, quite unimpressed and plainly disappointed.

"Soap! a damned high-priced soap. Well, lots of guys never handled this stuff in all their sailing. But I lifted a chunk off the beach at Timor and got four hundred for it, so you needn't have no doubts when I tell you to take a sniff of a lump of real ambergrease," said Manton with prideful certainty.

"What! ambergris!" exclaimed Haynes. "Are you sure?" he added, as holding it close to his face he caught the peculiar sickly odor which in minute quantities renders it indispensable to the perfume trade.

"Sure! just so sure that I ain't quitting this rock until I've gone over it with a tooth-comb and found where this guy lifted it off," announced Manton with stolid decision as one after the other he seized upon the dirty lumps his foot had dislodged, and hastily cleansing them, set them not unlike a little heap of grime-encrusted potatoes.

Half an hour later the two men relinquished their labors, having brought to light possibly some twenty pounds weight, mostly in pieces no larger than a walnut, though a few odd bits were larger than the original discovery. As was to be expected, all had lain as in a nest.

"Reckon that's all the guy was toting—likely in some sort of a sack which rotted when he cashed in," said Manton, straightening up.

"Queer, though, that a guy should go packing that weight when he took sick—must have been a stroke or something sudden," said Haynes thoughtfully.

"Well, we needn't worry—he just cashed in, that's all—but it's a stroke of luck for us, nothing less than two thousand bucks lying here," replied Manton, callously eyeing the pile with supreme appreciation.

"Two thousand! Why, that's the price of a nifty little craft," said Haynes sharply.

"Sure! and if it was twenty thousand I wouldn't kick—I got it in my head that this is only the tail-end of a big cache somewhere on this rock," growled Manton irritably.

"Maybe," replied Haynes without enthusiasm, his mind harking back again to the enigma of the unknown. "All the same there's something mighty queer about it—a guy doesn't drop in his tracks like this one without a mighty good reason, I feel it in my bones. There's something which ain't natural missing from this yarn." And despite his partner's impatience at such mere sentiment a silence and depression quite unaccountable came upon Haynes.

It may have been that an aura of bygone happenings still lingered around the spot and by some queer psychological kink found in him a medium keyed to its translation into tangible expression of the volcanic emotions that had filled to overflowing the last tense moments of the mysteriously stricken man—for who shall limit the unplumbed depths of human consciousness?

However, whatever the origin of this depression there was born in him a great unwillingness to prosecute the exploration farther, yet having no good reason to oppose the advance he silently and gloomily followed his partner toward the glare of the open and mechanically imitated his example of snapping a twig every now and again to blaze a sure return to their lucky discovery, which for lack of a container they temporarily abandoned; later the bread bag from the camp would serve well for the noble burden.

Shortly they stood on the nude, swelling breast of the hill, here almost devoid of soil where naught but patches of coarse, brittle herbage found sustenance. The wall of jungle they had pierced appeared by contrast forbidding and impenetrable.

They stood for a moment gazing across the open to where the fleckless blue sky seemed almost to lie on the edge of the slope.

"That guy must have cut across this way from the beach beyond. Ambergrease ain't never found except on the beach or floating," said the practical Manton.

"Queer though—there ain't a thing to hurt a canary here. Yet toting a pack he drops like a stone," brooded Haynes persistently.

"Well, we got no need to worry about it—he's dead meat, we ain't—

Hell! Sheer off!" Manton exclaimed in startled surprize as a shaft of speeding light flashed at a tangent to their course, with a swish of thrashing wings so close to his face that involuntarily his head jerked back as though to escape the impact of the fleeing bird.

"Looks like it's bad scared," said Haynes as both men wheeled instantly to follow the mad flight of a small island pigeon; and in the same second perceived the cause of its reckless daring. For just behind and a trifle higher followed two scintillating streaks going at the same terrific pace. Things a good foot in length, thin, and of an intense metallic blue; things that sped with wings vibrating so rapidly that merely a blur of glinting beams flickered above them, as invisible as the wing-beat of a poised humming-bird. But these things were shaped as bird never was, and though by reason of their pace impossible to descry with any clarity, yet the impression received by each astounded watcher was identical and expressed instantly.

"Flies!" cried Haynes in blank amazement.

"Or else my eyes are on the blink!" cried Manton incredulously.

And as he uttered the words, as though to deny the implication, there came a sudden hawklike acceleration of the pursuers as they swooped on the racing splash of green, and gleaming blue obliterated it. Then the tangle burst apart and a ball of green pitched with convulsive flutterings to the ground and lay there motionless.

"A foot long! Flies!" muttered Haynes with his eyes glued on the now leisurely hovering slayers.

"Flies sure enough!" said Manton in a tone of complete bewilderment. Truly there could be little doubt of the classification, for now could be plainly noted the long bisected trunks and their metallic-lustered nakedness, a quality shared by the monstrous wings, two pairs of bluish, gleaming transparency, wings whose horny framework stood out as distinctly as that of an umbrella.

Then like stones they dropped, and though amid some taller tussocks yet their weight bore down the coarse herbage and proved no hindrance to their fastening on the little heap of green feathers.

"Eat pigeons! Flies!" said Haynes incredulously.

"I'm going to smash them anyway!" declared Manton angrily.

And filled with an unreasoning resentment at such undreamt-of freaks the two men strode rapidly to within a few paces of the intently occupied brutes. Then doubt assailed Haynes and halting he caught his partner by the arm.

"Hold on, Manton! Say, looks like these things are poisonous—the way that pigeon dropped," he exclaimed in a low, dubious voice as they came to a halt.

"Dunno; maybe they are too," admitted Manton uneasily. "And we've got not even a stick to shoo them off—might be wise to get a couple of switches from the bush, eh?" he queried with indecision.

"I reckon so—look out! they're up!" cried Haynes as the colossal insects suddenly darted upward several feet and with deep, droning, pulsating wings hovered restlessly over the spot.

That the close approach of the men had aroused resentment was instantly obvious, for after a few seconds of indecisive reconnoitering there commenced the savage circling of attack, sufficiently nerve-racking to the object of a hornet's wrath, but now a hundred times more terrorizing. Apart from their almost certain venom, the momentary glimpse afforded of their grimly efficient mandibles, an inch long and broad at the base as the jaws of a small pair of

wire-cutters, set in the flat, indigo-hued head and flanked by a pair of yellow, tigerish eyes reflecting rays from multitudinous facets; these things alone were sufficient to cast a chill of fear on the hardiest.

Abruptly there came a mad rush to the wall of bush they had just left as a wave of panic swept upon the two men, yet curiously mingled ran a thread of almost wrathful contempt: after all, these things were no more than mere insects, unique and colossal though they were—but that pigeon! instantly slain! Something incredibly deadly had been at work there.

Savagely thrashing around with their battered wide-brimmed hats, the men tore for the jungle. It was not more than fifty paces distant, and with the insects held at bay by the vigorous flailing, it is quite possible that they would have reached sanctuary unharmed. That is, had two been the only foes to reckon with, but such was not the case, and only blind chance succored the fugitives from catastrophe. For they had covered barely a dozen paces when, probably aroused by the commotion, from a point close to the edge of the jungle there arose some half a dozen of like gigantic insects. For a second they hung stationary and facing the pursuit, as though intelligently surveying the situation, then with the astounding foresight of a coursing greyhound they darted off at a tangent to the course of the racing men, obviously bent on intercepting them.

Their flight was almost like the flight of an arrow, and the fate of the fugitives was apparently sealed, a mere matter of seconds, for there could be no least prospect of combatting such an array of assailants when already a couple of these malignant brutes were only just held at bay.

Of this fresh menace the panic-stricken men were unwitting; they had neither ears, eyes, nor thought for other than the loud buzzing fiends that incessantly circled in flashing shafts of metallic iridescence as the vicious brutes swept around and over and crisscrossed their elliptoid path at lightning speed as they sought to penetrate the desperate defense of their quarry.

Fortunate it was they were ignorant of this new accession to their foes, for the knowledge must assuredly have completed their demoralization, and a single second's slackening of their defensive would have afforded the savage brutes their opportunity. What that would entail there was no saying, there was no precedent to work upon with surety; only their colossal size, the instantaneous slaying of the pigeon and the analogy of the comparatively insignificant hornet with its painful virulence, its directness of attack and its total indifference to the mere bulk of the object of its wrath, and a like intense savagery and carnivorous voracity; only by these points of marked resemblance could any conception be formulated of the possible, and very probable, magnification of such malignant potentialities in these unique and monstrous things. The one chance in a million that intervened, fate proffered in a humble guise.

There came a rustling and movement amid the coarse herbage as the great droning swept by, a sudden halt of the covey, and then like the strike of a hawk they shot downward and with unerring aim lit squarely upon a large island rat; there came the horrible rat shriek of pain, silenced abruptly as the huge insects tore their victim into shreds, gouging the hot flesh from the quivering body with their terrible jaws with incredible rapidity and savagery. In a few moments naught but gleaming pink bones remained, and of these many of the more fragile had been cut clean in two by some eager pair of man-

dibles that, shearing through the encasing flesh, had not halted there.

The feast ended, they remained a moment quietly cleansing their limbs, a simple process of drawing them gently through the slightly opened terrible jaws, as in like manner any of the wasp tribe may be often noted. Then as a unit they shot upward, and as if some memory of a previous objective had been retained, circled several times in widening circumference before taking flight to join the couple that now were flitting to and fro above the roof of jungle, under which the fugitives had gained refuge from their pursuers, the tangled network of greenery constituting an impenetrable barrier to such wide- and brittle-winged creatures.

"That was a close call," growled Manton. "But it beats me—sounds like a kid's fairy yarn," he added, drawing his hand across his forehead and flicking aside a spray of sweat.

"You've said it—no more for mine. Ambergris or no, I'm through," affirmed Haynes sourly as he peered here and there amid the clusters of thin pliant stems. Well within the saving shelter they had come to a halt, and now in a little depression lay panting; days of cramped misery in a small craft are ill training for a race such as theirs.

"Seems like I heard a big buzzing a little ways off," affirmed Haynes uneasily.

"Maybe—reckon those two ain't the only ones on this blasted rock," agreed Manton, scowling at the thought. "And there they are—listen to that, will you," he added in a hushed, startled tone.

There was no need to listen, it was impossible to miss the swelling, thrumming, coming nearer and nearer as the partners gazed with alarm at the thickly laced limbs and greenery overhead.

"Hell! there's a bunch of them and they've scented us!" exclaimed Haynes savagely. Then, as by the lessening and spasmodic volume of sound they knew, the great insects were alighting on the tangle above. "My oath! if they were to wiggle through! say, we better beat it to camp and get off this damned rock!" he added in an angry whisper.

"Reckon so; but I ain't going to leave two thousand bucks for no bloody flies. We can pick it up as we go, it ain't more than a step out of the way," declared Manton firmly.

"That's so—two thousand don't grow on every bush. Come on—step easy, maybe we can ditch that bunch," cautioned Haynes in a whisper. And instantly crouching low and moving softly the men made off in the direction of their find. But to their dismay they quickly discovered that no matter what the care exercised, it was impossible to make passage through the jungle without imparting a continual swaying and tremor to the springy slender limbs and dense foliage above, and from their first step the thrumming leapt again to life and thereafter accompanied their every step.

"Well, how the devil are we going to tote the stuff?" queried Haynes, irritably staring at the little heap of dirty lumps.

"Stow it in our shirts, I reckon, as we ain't got a bag like this guy." Abruptly he fell silent and a look of quickening horror crept into his eyes. "By God! that's it! They got him!" said he slowly, while Haynes stared a moment from the scattered yellowed bones to the frowning face of his partner. The thing was so obvious, it fitted in so completely with the otherwise inexplicable facts of the case, and except that their own peril had so far absorbed their entire thoughts, the discovery would have been forced upon them before.

"Likely he had not gone fifty feet when it killed him!" exclaimed Haynes in a horrified whisper, alluding to the fact that this was about the distance to the open hillside.

"They sting—and you finish?" muttered Manton.

"I reckon that's the way it goes," said Haynes very quietly.

"Maybe if we waited till dark?" he queried.

"And how are we going through this mess in the dark? And that's not the name for it after sundown," growled Manton sneeringly.

The truth of the objection could not be gainsaid; in silence the two men stared blankly at each other.

"But—you mean to say——?" said Haynes with an odd catch in his voice.

"That's so — they've got us cinched," replied Manton shortly, even coolly, his phlegmatic nature seemingly less perturbed than the finer-fibered Haynes.

"Well, we *are* in a hole!" said Haynes angrily. His nerves were on edge and a dull resentment at his partner's lack of emotion came upon him.

"Well, there ain't no use taking them to camp with us; might as well stop here—maybe they'll forget it and quit," observed Manton, though his tone held no great optimism. "We've got to sit down and think it out—though I'm damn hungry right now," he added very sourly.

Haynes stared at his partner, the idea of hunger had not yet occurred to him, but at once a desire for food came upon him; the more intensely so that an appalling vista of an indefinitely prolonged incarceration lacking even an ounce of provender instantly flashed before his horrified inner vision.

For a little neither uttered another word; each sat in moody contemplation, racking his brains to discover a practical scheme of escape from the unique trap into which they had been driven. And as the moments sped, each realized more fully the hopelessness of their plight as now and again there swept up a fresh wave of the vicious sound, for which there could be but one explanation, the coming of new reinforcements of the malignant brutes.

They came in ones and twos as though stray foragers had been attracted by the commotion at the spot, and shortly there must have been assembled fully a dozen of the insects; a fact of which the beset were fully cognizant.

"Something has got to be done quick—the longer we stop the worse off we are," exclaimed Manton in a spasm of wrath. "If we only had a dog or something to tie up while we made our getaway!" he snarled in impotent anger.

"Eh! a dog?" said Haynes and paused while a flash of inspiration dawned in his light blue eyes, as his partner's random thought flung open the portals of an inner consciousness far more acute than his normal mental plane. "We ain't got a dog, but there's two of us——" Again he paused.

"Sure, there's two of us—but what are you driving at? Oh, I get you—one of us hikes off taking these blasted things with him while the other beats it down to the camp and shoves off—but what about the guy who stops?" queried Manton with a puzzled frown.

"The only thing I can figure out is he's got to take a chance on it. The boat can stand on and off till dark, then creep back and the guy must be handy in the bush and make a rush for it. No reason why he shouldn't pull through, likely they'll be sort of dozy after dark, and there ain't a fly that's stuck on salt water. Anyway it's the best lineup we got," asserted Haynes feverishly.

"Maybe you're right—we've got to do something or the air will be lousy with the bloody things. Let her rip—who's stopping?" he asked gruffly.

"Well—it looks like you were—you see I'm slim, you ain't, you'd shake the brush like a bull going through it, where I'd hardly make a leaf move—so I guess it's up to me to take a chance at being stung. However, I'm agreeable whichever way it is," declared Haynes quickly, with an attempt at indifference his eagerness but crudely simulated, though as a statement of simple fact his words admitted of no refutation and received the instant concurrence of Manton.

"I reckon you're right," said he simply. "Well, that's settled. Better beat it pronto! Give me ten minutes start to trail these damned things off—I'll angle around the hill. If you make it, draw in as close as you can about dusk and I'll be waiting at the edge of the brush, one whistle from each will do. Of course we can't tell a thing about what's going to happen, there ain't no sailing directions on this traverse. Just one sure thing——" He stopped hesitantly for a second, then roughly thrust out his hand. "So long, mate," he added gruffly, and Haynes, extending his long sinewy hand, nervously grasped for a second his partner's thick-muscled fingers, saying hastily, "At dusk, mate—if I get through."

Then Manton, on the point of wheeling around, suddenly halted and exclaimed, "If we ain't forgot that muck!" as he nodded toward the little pyramid of dirty lumps.

"The ambergris? let it stay! I can't pack it anyway," snapped Haynes impatiently.

"No, that's so, you've got to go light. But I'll slide back and pick it up—load it in my shirt—two thousand is two thousand," said Manton almost apologetically.

"It's up to you. But for God's sake get off—every minute counts now," exclaimed Haynes angrily.

From where he stood, Haynes for a moment could trace the progress of his partner by the deliberate heedlessness of his going; and with him went the hateful droning, though soon but a resonant murmur as distance intervened, until it was entirely submerged in the brooding silence that seemed to the listener to have closed in upon him. Then with feverish alertness he commenced his own retreat, and bending low, he crept from the spot, a foot at a time and often halting to listen intently for the dread evidence of malignant pursuit; but never the faintest sound of the vicious creatures came to him, and gradually his face cleared of the terrible tension that had possessed it, and his movements from a furtive crawl became a rapid though careful passage that clove the masses of pliant growths with a touch so deft that there remained barely a quiver to evidence his going.

"Clear of that hell's roost! beat them to it!" cried Haynes exultingly, as he mopped the dripping sweat from his begrimed face with one ragged sleeve, and through the other shook a trembling fist at the dull green wall that wound its solid front in sinuous course around the island contour.

"You blasted freaks! you——" he swore with intense bitterness; then, words failing him, he relapsed into a wrathful mumbling as he shipped the sculls in their rowlocks, and with long vigorous strokes pulled seaward until nearly half a mile lay between him and the terrible rock.

Although he had been expecting the whistle, yet its actual happening sped a stab of unreasoning terror through his high-tuned nerves. It was now almost dark—that is, as

dark as a tropic moon in its second quarter will admit—and from the approach of dusk he had timed his return so that when the crucial moment came barely a glimmer of unnecessary light should favor a possible attack by the terrible brutes. Luckily the night, though moonlit, had the edge shorn from its brilliance by a singularly fortunate haze, or rather solidity of the atmosphere, that had for some hours been imperceptibly gathering. Indeed, the weather-wise eye of the solitary man had almost unconsciously sensed its presence and the peculiar greenish hue of the blurred horizon, and with a moody shake of his head he had muttered, "Something dirty brewing, or I'm no sailorman," a premonition of impending trouble quickly submerged in the more pressing and greater peril.

Within fifty feet of the black mass of low bluff and wall of jungle he had stopped softly the way of the craft, which was now drifting very slowly shoreward. Now that a dead calm had succeeded the blow, only the ceaseless mournful swish of the miniature breakers broke the profound silence of the sultry darkness, and Manton's whistle had sounded as though its author might well have been imagined within hand's grasp of the craft's stem, and the voice that called quietly held the same queer acoustic quality.

"It's all right, Haynes!" said the invisible speaker. "I ain't heard a thing since sundown. Keep right on the way you are; if I hear a sound I'll hail you."

"Right, but you might swim out a little way, these blasted sculls creak so—might roust them out," came the reply in a querulous and irritable whisper, as after a couple of cautious strokes the speaker lay on his oars.

"Come out! I ain't no fish, and you know it, Haynes!" cried the voice in the darkness very sharply and even angrily.

"For God's sake don't talk so loud! Do you want the whole bunch down on us?" said Haynes fiercely in a tremulous whisper. "Anyway you've got to take to the water; I ain't going to shove one of these bloody rocks through her for no one," he added more soberly and firmly.

"Rocks?—that's so, you're right. I can wade out waist-deep anyhow, and you come in that far—go slow and you'll be all right," called back Manton, his wrath appeased at this natural and seamanlike explanation.

"Say when," said Haynes nervously, and after a second's pause, "Here goes! come right in," came instantly a hoarse whisper, and immediately followed a slight rustling of the brush, succeeded by a hasty stumbling step over the boulders that strewed the beach at the spot, and in a second the sound of a heavy body splashing through the water. Even then the man in the boat sat motionless, his body strained forward, intently listening and fearfully hesitant. He sat still as a figure of stone, until another sound burst into the silent, stifling night; a sound that galvanized the seated figure with a violent tremor. A dreaded resonance so horrifying in its malignant promise that for a moment he was incapable of speech or voluntary movement. Nor did Manton's loud hail restore his shattered mentality.

"Haynes! they're on the move! Come in quick before they scent us! They're over the bush. Quick!" he cried loudly, abandoning all caution in the extreme peril of his position.

But no response came from the dark blotch which even his keen vision with difficulty identified as their craft—for now the strange murk had almost obscured the moonlight, and the nearest objects were but darker blurs of indeterminate nature. At

this immobility a sudden doubt struck home to him.

"Haynes! What's the matter? Why don't you come in? I can't go no farther," he hailed anxiously.

Then the seated man awoke to volcanic life, every muscle and sinew in his spare hard flesh tensed with the rigidity of a tightly wound steel spring, as he snatched at the sculls and drove the blades deep into the heavy black water, and at gathering speed urged the boat seaward! For terror, unreasoning frantic terror had taken possession of him; escape, at any price, was the sole instinct surging madly in his chaotic consciousness, and every other thought or emotion had been swept away by the terror of that awful thrumming. The cry of amazement and wrath that came from Manton went entirely unheeded, as it was, save unconsciously, unheard.

"You ain't leavin' me! are you?" boomed the great voice of Manton.

Then in a few seconds, it being obvious that such was indeed the case, his wrath flared to a white heat.

"You white-livered dog! if I had a gun I'd get you—a thing like you ain't fit to live. You——"

And then his voice was drowned in the shrill screaming that suddenly broke out from the seaward. High-pitched, frantic screams of insane terror, intermingled with the crashing of wood against wood, as though someone were flailing around him with a heavy object desperately, recklessly, and unheeding where his blows might land.

Which is exactly what was happening, for Haynes, upright in the boat, was aiming viciously at a something in the darkness; a something that swooped with great wings vibrating, and filling the air with a frightful, menacing resonance.

And all the while came that ceaseless, horrible animal screaming, as of some huge rodent in the extremity of fear and anguish.

The end came as suddenly as the commencement, the frightful sound suddenly ceased, as though cut by a knife, and Manton, crouching to his chin in the still water, heard instantly the crash of a falling body, a heavy lifeless crash as of one collapsing without effort, or thought to ease the impact.

"My God! they've got him!" he exclaimed in a whisper hoarse with emotion; and as the words escaped his lips there came from the darkness an intermittent moaning and whimpering. Once, twice, thrice, it came through the stifling void, and then there was silence, not even a murmur of the hateful droning that had been fitfully audible as a diabolical accompaniment.

And as this, too, ceased, then despair gripped at the listener, and very quietly and coolly he arose and plodded deliberately shoreward muttering audibly as he went.

"Well, that's the finish, I reckon—boat gone, grub gone, stranded on this blasted rock with sure death waiting. May as well get me now as later—there's no wedding bells in this yarn for me."

And so he reached again the beach, and greatly to his surprize slid into the inky shelter of the jungle unmolested.

And as he gained the shelter, nature awoke from her drugged somnolence.

A vast stirring and sighing shuddered through the heavy air, as there passed the first warning of the coming upheaval.

All that night the hurricane endured, and dawn disclosed its terrific violence; the jungle lay in swaths of indescribable and splintered wreckage, an encircling barrier impassable to man or beast, yet from

it crawled a haggard and disheveled figure—Manton.

Stolid and deliberate as ever, calmly he surveyed the heaving expanse of tremendous seas; stared thoughtfully from the wild sea to the now calm blue sky, and growled.

"Another twenty-four hours and there won't be nothing but a swell on—it'll be soon enough to chance it." Then turning landward he gazed grimly at the work of the storm, and, as men of sociable temperament will when solitary and under the stress of emotion, again spoke aloud.

"If it wasn't for the lee of that boulder I'd be lying there too. Anyway the blow chased those bloody things to perdition out of it—guess they won't trouble me now, if I don't flag them."

The supposition was not unlikely, as these lightly framed monsters must have been driven far in the first blast that had leapt out of the darkness and screamed across the island. And with it had come ashore, bottom up, the little craft, straight to the grasp of Manton, who, foreseeing such a providential chance, was instantly again waist-deep in the swirling waters.

Lit by the continuous lightning, there was just time for a Samson such as Manton to run the craft ashore high and dry in a sheltered corner of the cove and sling the meager outfit alongside; luckily Haynes, in his insane terror, had not spared the time to ship a single article.

All that night, wet and cold to the bone, Manton had lain in the lee of a providential boulder, but, now that the boat and provender were regained, calm and stolidly hopeful.

The second dawn found him launching the frail shell, a task his great thews made light of. True, only a single scull had been regained, but with the seaman's handiness he had, the previous day, laboriously whittled and trimmed with his sheath-knife a very fair substitute from a fair-sized growth.

Sped by his powerful strokes, the craft took the water, and soon the island was receding into the speckless blue background.

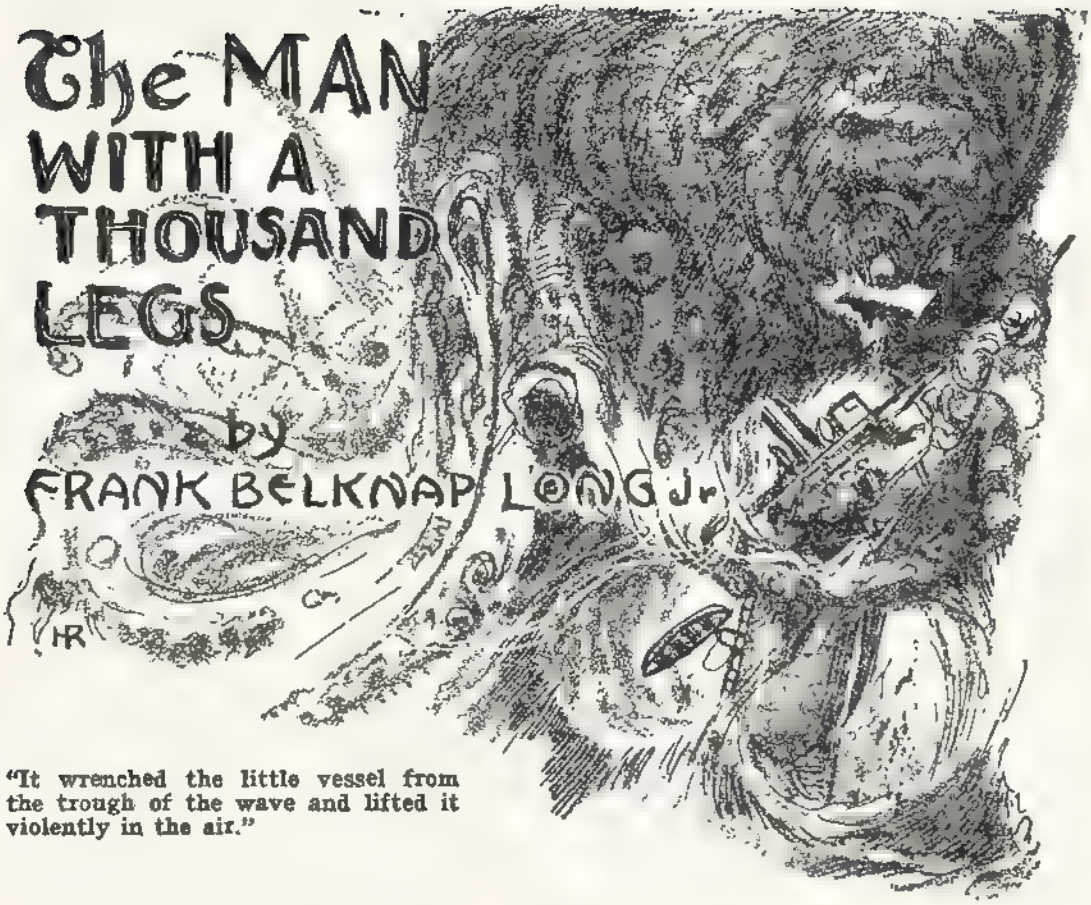
Later he slackened his efforts, and holding no more than way on the craft as it rose and sank over the crests and valleys of the huge smooth swell, stared with scowling wrath at the evil spot where fate had smiled so fairly as though to hide the deadly malice in her heart.

"God!" he muttered. "To think that hell lies there—and Haynes is lying somewhere among the coral, fathoms deep! Poor guy, I guess he wasn't to blame—but his nerve broke. Poor guy! I ain't no judge and jury—and we with two thousand to rig us up anew!" he said mournfully, glancing at a small bundle tightly lashed under the stern seat.

"Well, so long, mate; you ain't to blame. So—long," he called gravely and even gently, then resumed his long, methodical stroke.

The MAN WITH A THOUSAND LEGS

by FRANK BELKNAP LONG Jr.



"It wrenched the little vessel from the trough of the wave and lifted it violently in the air."

1. *Statement of Horace Randall, Psychanalysist*

SOMEONE rapped loudly on the door of my bedroom. It was past midnight but I had been unable to sleep and I welcomed the disturbance.

"Who's there?" I asked.

"A young man what insists on being admitted, sir," replied the raucous voice of my housekeeper. "A young man—and very thin and pale he is, sir—what says he's business what won't wait. 'He's in bed,' I says, but then he says as how you're the only doctor what can help him now. He says as how he hasn't slept or ate for a week, and he ain't nothing but a boy, sir!"

"Tell him he can come in," I replied as I slid into my dressing gown and reached for a cigar.

The door opened to admit a thin shaft of light and a young man so incredibly emaciated that I stared at him in horror. He was six feet tall and extremely broad-shouldered, but I don't think he weighed one hundred pounds. As he approached me he staggered and leaned against the wall for support. His eyes fairly blazed. It was obvious that some tremendous idea swayed him. I gently indicated a chair and he collapsed into it.

For a moment he sat and surveyed me. When I offered him a cigar he brushed it aside with a gesture of contempt.

"Why should I poison my body with such things?" he snapped. "To-

bacco is for weaklings and children."

I studied him curiously. He was apparently an extraordinary young man. His forehead was high and broad, his nose was curved like a simitar, and his lips were so tightly compressed that only a thin line indicated his mouth.

I waited for him to speak, but silence enveloped him like a rubber jacket. "I shall have to break the ice somehow," I reflected; and then suddenly I heard myself asking: "You have something to tell me—some confession, perhaps, that you wish to make to me?"

My question aroused him. His shoulders jerked, and he leaned forward, gripping both arms of his chair. "I have been robbed of my birthright," he said. "I am a man of genius, and once, for a brief moment, I had power—tremendous power. Once I projected my personality before vast multitudes of people, and every word that I uttered increased my fame and flattered my vanity."

He was trembling and shaking so violently that I was obliged to rise and lay a restraining hand upon his shoulder. "Delusions of magnificence," I murmured, "undoubtedly induced by a malignant inferiority-complex."

"It is not that," he snapped. "I am a poet, an artist, and I have within me a tremendous force that must be expanded. The world has denied me self-expression through legitimate channels and now I am justified in hating the world. Let society beware!"

He threw back his head and laughed. His hilarity seemed to increase the tension that had somehow crept into the room.

"Call me a madman if you will," he exclaimed, "but I crave power. I can not rest until my name is on a million lips."

"A conservative course of treatment——" I began.

"I want no treatment," he shouted, and then, in a less agitated voice, "You would be surprized, perhaps, if I told you my name!"

"What *is* your name?" I asked.

"Arthur St. Amand," he replied, and stood up.

I was so astonished that I dropped my cigar. I may even add that I was momentarily awed. *Arthur St. Amand!*

"Arthur St. Amand," he repeated. "You are naturally amazed to discover that the pale, harassed and half-insane youth that you see before you was once called the peer of Newton and Leonardo Da Vinci. You are amazed to discover that the starving lad with an inferiority-complex was once feted by kings and praised by men whose lightest words will go thundering down Time. It is all so amazing and so uproariously funny, but the tragedy remains. Like Dr. Faustus I once looked upon the face of God, and now I'm less than any schoolboy."

"You are still very young," I gasped. "You can't be more than twenty-four."

"I am twenty-three," he said. "It was precisely three years ago that I published my brochure on etheric vibrations. For six months I lived in a blaze of glory. I was the marvelous boy of the scientific world, and then that Frenchman advanced his theory——"

"I suppose you mean Monsieur Paul Rondoli," I interrupted. "I recall the sensation his startling refutation made at the time. He completely eclipsed you in the popular mind, and later the scientific world declared you a fraud. Your star set very suddenly."

"But it will rise again," exclaimed my young visitor. "The world will

discuss me again, and this time I shall not be forgotten. I shall prove my theory. I shall demonstrate that the effect of etheric vibration on single cells is to change—to change——." He hesitated and then suddenly shouted, "But no, I shall not tell you. I shall tell no one. I came here tonight to unburden my mind to you. At first I thought of going to a priest. It is necessary that I should confess to someone.

"When my thoughts are driven in upon themselves they become monstrous. I have an active and terrible brain, and I must speak out occasionally. I chose you because you are a man of intelligence and discrimination and you have heard many confessions. But I shall not discuss etheric vibrations with you. When you see *It* you will understand."

He turned abruptly and walked out of the room and out of my house without once looking back. I never saw him again.

2. *Diary of Thomas Shiel, Novelist and Short-Story Writer*

JULY 21. This is my fourth day at the beach. I've already gained three pounds, and I'm so sunbaked that I frightened a little girl when I went swimming this morning. She was building sand castles and when she saw me she dropped her shovel and ran shrieking to her mother. "Horrible black man!" she shouted. I suppose she thought I was a genie out of the *Arabian Nights*. It's pleasant here—I've almost got the evil taste of New York out of my mouth. Elsie's coming down for the week-end.

July 22. The little girl I frightened yesterday has disappeared. The police are searching for her and it is generally believed that she has been kidnaped. The unfortunate occurrence has depressed everyone at the beach. All bathing parties have been abandoned, and even the children sit about sad-eyed and dejected. No footprints were found on the sands near the spot where the child was last seen. . . .

July 23. Another child has disappeared, and this time the abductor left a clue. A young man's walking stick and hat were found near the scene of a violent struggle. The sand for yards around was stained with blood. Several mothers left the New Beach Hotel this morning with their children.

July 24. Elsie came this morning. A new crime occurred at the very moment of her arrival, and I scarcely had the heart to explain the situation to her. My paleness evidently frightened her. "What is the matter?" she asked; "you look ill." "I am ill," I replied. "I saw something dreadful on the beach this morning." "Good heavens!" she exclaimed; "have they found one of the children?" It was a great relief to me that she had read about the children in the New York papers. "No," I said. "They didn't find the children, but they found the body of a man and he didn't have a drop of blood in him. He had been drained dry. And all about his body the investigators found curious little mounds of yellowish slime—of ooze. When the sunlight struck this substance it glittered." "Has it been examined under a miscroscope?" asked Elsie. "They are examining it now," I explained. "We shall know the results by this evening." "God pity us all," said Elsie, and she staggered and nearly fell. I was obliged to support her as we entered the hotel.

July 25. Two curious developments. The chemist who examined the jellyish substance found near the body on the beach declares that it is living protoplasm, and he has sent it to the Department of Health for

classification by one of their expert biologists. And a deep pool some eight yards in diameter has been discovered in a rock fissure about a mile from the New Beach Hotel, which evidently harbors some queer denizens. The water in this pool is as black as ink and strongly saline. The pool is eight or ten feet from the ocean, but it is affected by the tides and descends a foot every night and morning. This morning one of the guests of the hotel, a young lady named Clara Phillips, had come upon the pool quite by accident, and being fascinated by its sinister appearance had decided to sketch it. She had seated herself on the rim of the rock fissure and was in the act of sketching in several large boulders and a strip of beach when something made a curious noise beneath her. "Gulp," it said. "Gulp!" She gave a little cry and jumped up just in time to escape a long golden tentacle which slithered toward her over the rocks. The tentacle protruded from the very center of the pool, out of the black water, and it filled her with unutterable loathing. She stepped quickly forward and stamped upon it, and her attack was so sudden that the thing was unable to flip away from her and escape back into the water. And Miss Phillips was an amazingly strong young woman. She ground the end of the tentacle into a bloody pulp with her heel. Then she turned and ran. She ran as she had not run since her "prep" school days. But as she raced across the soft beach she fancied she could hear a monstrous, lumbering something pursuing her. It is to her credit that she did not look back.

And this is the story of little Harry Doty. I offered him a beautiful new dime, but he told it to me gratis. I give it in his own words.

"Yes sir, I've always knowed about that pool. I used to fish for crabs and sea-cucumbers and big, purple anemones in it, sir. But up until last week I allus knowed what I'd bring up. Onct or twice I used to get somethin' a bit out o' the ordinary, such as a bleedin'-tooth shell or a headless worm with green suckers in its tail and lookin' like the devil on a Sunday outin' or a knowin'- lookin' skate what ud glare and glare at me, sir. But never nothin' like this thing, sir. I caught it on the top o' its head and it had the most human-lookin' eyes I ever saw. They were blue and soulless, sir. It spat at me, and I throws down my line and beats it. I beats it, sir. Then I hears it come lumbering after me over the beach. It made a funny gulpin' noise as if it was a-lickin' its chops."

JULY 26. Elsie and I are leaving tomorrow. I'm on the verge of a lethal collapse. Elsie stutters whenever she tries to talk. I don't blame her for stuttering but I can't understand why she wants to talk at all after what we've seen. . . There are some things that can only be expressed by silence.

The local chemist got a report this morning from the Board of Health. The stuff found on the beach consisted of hundreds of cells very much like the cells that compose the human body. And yet they weren't human cells. The biologists were completely mystified by them, and a small culture is now on its way to Washington, and another is being sent to the American Museum of Natural History.

This morning the local authorities investigated the curious black pool in the rocks. Elsie and I and most of the other vacationists were on hand to watch operations. Thomas Wilshire, a member of the New Jersey constabulary, threw a plummet line into the pool and we all watched it eagerly as it paid out. "A hun-

dred feet," murmured Elsie as the police looked at one another in amazement. "It probably went into the sea," someone exclaimed. "I don't think the pool itself is that deep." Thomas Wilshire shook his head. "There's queer things in that pool," he said. "I don't like the looks of it."

The diver was a bristling, brave little man with some obscure nervous affliction that made him tremble violently. "You'll have to go down at once," said Wilshire. The diver shook his head and shuffled his feet.

"Get him into his suit, boys!" ordered Wilshire, and the poor wretch was lifted bodily upon strong shoulders and transformed into a loathsome, goggle-eyed monster.

In a moment he had advanced to the pool and vanished into its sinister black depths. Two men worked valiantly at the pumps, while Wilshire nodded sleepily and scratched his chin. "I wonder what he'll find," he mused. "Personally, I don't think he's got much chance of ever coming up. I wouldn't be in his shoes for all the money in the United States mint."

After several minutes the rubber tubing began to jerk violently. "The poor lad!" muttered Wilshire. "I knew he didn't have a chance. Pull, boys, pull!"

The tubing was rapidly pulled in. There was nothing attached to it, but the lower portion was covered with glittering golden slime. Wilshire picked up the severed end and examined it casually. "Neatly clipped," he said. "The poor devil!"

The rest of us looked at one another in horror. Elsie grew so pale that I thought she was about to faint. Wilshire was speaking again: "We've made one momentous discovery," he said. We crammed eagerly forward. Wilshire paused for the fraction of a second, and a faint smile of triumph curled his lips. "There's something in that pool," he finished. "Our friend's life has not been given in vain."

I had an absurd desire to punch his fat, triumphant face, and might have done so, but a scream from the others quelled the impulse.

"Look," cried Elsie. She was pointing at the black surface of the pool. It was changing color. Slowly it was assuming a reddish hue; and then a hellish something shot up and bobbed for a moment on its surface. "A human arm!" groaned Elsie and hid her face in her hands. Wilshire whistled softly. Two more objects joined the first and then something round which made Elsie stare and stare through the spaces between her fingers.

"Come away!" I commanded. "Come away at once." I seized her by the arm and was in the act of forcefully leading her from the edge of that dreadful charnel, for charnel it had become, when I was arrested by a shout from Wilshire.

"Look at it! Look at it!" he yelled. "That's the horrid thing. God, it isn't human!"

We both turned back and stared. There are blasphemies of creation that can not be described, and the thing which rose up to claim the escaping fragments of its dismantled prey was of that order. I remember vaguely, as in a nightmare of Tartarus, that it had long golden arms which shone and sparkled in the sunlight, and a monstrous curved beak below two piercing black eyes in which I saw nothing but unutterable malice.

The idea of standing there and watching it munch the fragmentary remains of the poor little diver was intolerable to me, and in spite of the loud protests of Wilshire, who wanted us, I suppose, to try and do something about it, I turned and ran, literally dragging Elsie with me. This was, as it turned out, the wisest

thing that I could have done, because the thing later emerged from the pool and nearly got several of the vacationists. Wilshire fired at it twice with a pistol, but the thing flopped back into the water apparently unharmed and submerged triumphantly.

3. Statement of Henry Greb, Prescription Druggist

I USUALLY shut up shop at 10 o'clock, but at closing time that evening I was leaning over the counter reading a ghost story, and it was so extremely interesting that I couldn't walk out on it. My nose was very close to the page and I didn't notice anything that was going on about me when suddenly I happened to look up and there he was standing and watching me.

I've seen some pale people in my time (most people that come with prescriptions are pale) and I've seen some skinny people, but I never have seen anyone as thin and pale as the young man that stood before me.

"Good heavens!" I said, and shut the book.

The young man's lips were twisted into a sickly smile. "Sorry to bother you," he says. "But I'm in a bad way. I'm in desperate need of medical attention!"

"What can I do to help you?" I says.

He looks at me very solemnly, as if he were making up his mind whether he could trust me. "This is really a case for a physician," he says.

"It's against the law for us to handle such cases," I told him.

Suddenly he held out his hand. I gasped. The fingers were smashed into a bloody pulp, and blood was running down his wrist. "Do something to stop the bleeding," he says. "I'll see a physician later."

Well, I got out some gauze and bound the hand up as best I could. "See a doctor at once," I told him. "Blood-poisoning will set in if you're not careful. Luckily, none of the bones are fractured."

He nodded, and for a moment his eyes flashed. "Damn that woman!" he muttered. "Damn her!"

"What's that?" I asked, but he had got himself together again and merely smiled. "I'm all upset," he said. "Didn't know just what I was saying—you must pardon me. By the way, I've got a little gash on my scalp which you might look at."

He removed his cap and I noticed that his hair was dripping wet. He parted it with his hand and revealed a nasty abrasion about an inch wide. I examined it carefully.

"Your friend wasn't very careful when he cast that plug," I says at length. "I never believe in fly-fishing when there's two in the boat. A friend of mine lost an eye that way."

"It *was* made by a fish-hook," he confessed. "You're something of a Sherlock Holmes, aren't you?"

I brushed aside his compliment with a careless gesture and turned for the bottle of carbolic acid which rested on the shelf behind me. It was then that I heard something between a growl and a gulp from the young man.

I wheeled abruptly, and caught him in the act of springing upon me. He was foaming at the mouth and his eyes bulged. I reached forward and seized him by the shoulders and in a moment we engaged in a desperate struggle upon the floor. He bit and scratched and kicked at me; and I was obliged to silence him by pummeling his face. It was at that moment that I noticed a peculiar fishy odor in the room, as if a breeze from the sea had entered through the open door.

For several moments I struggled and fought and strained and then

something seemed to give suddenly beneath me. The young man slipped from my grasp and made for the door. I endeavored to follow, but I stumbled over something slippery and fell flat upon my face.

When I got up, the young man was gone, and in my hand I held something so weird that I could scarcely believe that it was real, and later I flung it from me with a cry of disgust. It was a reddish, rubbery substance about five inches long, and its under edge was lined with little golden suckers that opened and closed while I stared at them.

I was still laboring under a fearful strain when Harry Morton entered the shop. He was trembling violently, and I noticed that he gazed fearfully behind him as he approached the counter.

"What's the best thing you have for highfalutin'-actin' nerves?" he asks.

"Bromides," I says. "I can mix you some. But what's the trouble with your nerves, Harry?"

"Hallucinations," he groans. "Them, and other things."

"Tell me about it," I says.

"I was leanin' 'gainst a lamppost," he says, "and I sees a big, lumbering yellowish thing walkin' along the street like a man. It wasn't natural, Henry. I'm not superstitious, but that there thing wasn't natural. And then it flops into the gutter and runs like a streak of lightnin'. It made a funny noise, too. It said 'Gulp'."

I mixed the bromides and handed him the glass over the counter. "I understand, Harry," I says. "But don't go about blowing your head off. No one would believe you."

4. Statement of Helen Bowan

I was sitting on the porch knitting when a young man with a bag stops in front of the house and looks up at me. "Good morning, madam," he says, "have you a room with bath?"

"Look at the sign, young man," I says to him. "I've a nice light room on the second floor that should just suit you."

Up he comes and smiles at me. But as soon as I saw him close I didn't like him. He was so terribly thin, and his hand was bandaged, and he looked as if he had been in a fight.

"How much do you want for the room?" he asks.

"Twelve dollars," I told him. I wanted to get rid of him and I thought the high rate would scare him off, but his hand goes suddenly into his pocket and he brings out a roll of bills, and begins counting them. I gets up very quickly and bows politely to him and takes his grip away from him, and rushes into the hall with it. I didn't want to lose a prospect like that. Cousin Hiram has a game which he plays with shells, and I knew that the young man would be Cousin Hiram's oyster.

I takes him upstairs and shows him the room and he seems quite pleased with it. But when he sees the bathtub he begins jumping up and down like a schoolboy, and clapping his hands and acting so odd that I begins to suspect that he is going out of his mind. "It's just the right size!" he shouts. "I hope you won't mind my keeping it filled all day. I bathe quite often. But I must have some salt to put into it. I can't bathe in fresh water!"

"He's certainly a queer one," I thought, "but I ain't complaining. It isn't often Hiram and I land a fish as rich as this one."

Finally he calms down and pushes me out of the room. "Everything's all right," he says. "But I don't want to be disturbed. When you get the salt, put it down in the hall and knock on the door. Under no cir-

cumstances must anyone enter this room."

He closed the door in my face and I heard the key grate in the lock. I didn't like it, and I didn't like the sounds that began to come from behind that door. First I heard a great sigh as if somehow he had got something disagreeable off his chest, and then I heard a funny gulping sound that I didn't like. He didn't waste any time in turning on the water either. I heard a great splashing and wallowing, and then, after about fifteen minutes, everything became as quiet as death.

We didn't hear anything more from him until that evening, when I sent Lizzie up with the salt. At first she tried the door, but it was locked, and she was obliged to put the bag down in the hall. But she didn't go away. She squeezed up close against the wall and waited. After about ten minutes the door opened slowly and a long, thin arm shot out and took in the bag. Lizzie said that the arm was yellow and dripping wet, and the thinnest arm she had ever seen. "But he's a thin young man, Lizzie," I explains to her. "That may be," she says, "but I never saw a human being with an arm like that before!"

Later, along about 10 o'clock I should say, I was sitting in the parlor sewing when I felt something wet land on my hand. I looked up and the ceiling was dripping red. I mean just what I say. The ceiling was all moist and dripping red.

I jumped up and ran out into the hall. I wanted to scream, but I bit my lips until the blood begins running down my chin and that makes me sober and determined. "That young man must go," I says to myself. "I can't have anything that isn't proper going on in this house."

I climbs the stairs looking as grim as death and pounds on the young man's door. "I won't stand for whatever's going on in there!" I shouted. "Open that door."

I heard something flopping about inside, and then the young man speaking to himself in a very low voice. "Its demands are insatiable. The vile, hungry beast! Why doesn't it think of something besides its stomach? I didn't want it to come then. But it doesn't need the ray now. When its appetite is aroused it changes without the ray. God, but I had a hard time getting back! Longer and longer between!"

Suddenly he seemed to hear the pounding. His queer chattering stops and I hear the key turn in the lock. The door opens ever so slightly and his face looks out at me. He is horrible to look at. His cheeks are sunken and there are big horrid rings under his eyes. There is a bandage tied about his head.

"I want you to leave at once," I tells him. "There's queer things going on here and I can't stand for queer things. You've *got* to leave."

He sighed and nodded. "It's just as well perhaps," he says. "I was thinking of going anyway. There are rats here."

"Rats!" I gasped. But I wasn't really surprized. I knew there were rats in the house. They made life miserable for me. I was never able to get rid of them. Even the cats feared them.

"I can't stand rats," he continues. "I'm packing up—clearing out now." He shuts the door in my face and I hears him throwing his things into a bag. Then the door opens again and he comes out on the landing. He is terribly pale, and he leans against the wall to catch himself, and then he starts descending the stairs.

I watches him as he goes down, and when he reaches the first landing he staggers and leans against the wall. Then he seems to grow shorter and he goes down the last flight three steps at a time. Then he makes

a running leap toward the door. I never saw anyone get through a door so quick, and I begins to suspect that he's done something that he's ashamed of.

So I turns about and goes into the room. When I looks at the floor I nearly faints. It's all slippery and wet, and seven dead rats are lying on their backs in the center of the room. And they are the palest-looking rats I've ever seen. Their noses and tails are pure white and they looks as if they didn't have a drop of blood in them. And then I goes into the alcove and looks at the bathtub. I won't tell you what I see there. But you remember what I says about the ceiling downstairs? I says it was dripping red, and the alcove wasn't so very different.

I gets out of that room as quick as I can, and I shuts and locks the door; and then I goes downstairs and telephones to Cousin Hiram. "Come right over, Hiram," I says. "Something terrible has been here!"

5. *Statement of Walter Noyes, Lighthouse Keeper*

I WAS pretty well done up. I'd been polishing the lamps all afternoon, and there were callouses on my hands as big as hen's eggs. I went up into the tower and shut myself in and got out a book that I'd been reading off and on for a week. It was a translation of the *Arabian Nights* by a fellow named Lang. Imaginative stuff like that is a great comfort to a chap when he's shut up by himself away off on the rim of the world, and I always enjoyed reading about Schemselnihar and Deryabar and the young King of the Black Isles.

I was reading the first part of *The King of the Black Isles* and had reached the sentence: "And then the youth drew away his robe and the Sultan perceived with horror that he was a man only to his waist, and from thence to his feet he had been changed into marble," when I happened to look toward the window.

An icy south wind was driving the rain furiously against the panes, and at first I saw nothing but a translucent glitter on the wet glass and vaguely beyond that the gleaming turmoil of dark, enormous waves. Then a dazzling and indescribable shape flattened itself against the window and blotted out the black sea and sky. I gasped and jumped up.

"A monstrous squid!" I muttered. "The storm must have blown it ashore. That tentacle will smash the glass if I don't do something."

I reached for my slicker and hat and in a moment I was descending the spiral stairway three steps at a time. Before emerging into the storm I armed myself with a revolver and the contents of a tumbler of strong Jamaica rum.

I paused for a moment in the doorway and stared about me. But from where I stood I could see nothing but the tall gray boulders fringing the southern extremity of the island and a stretch of heaving and rolling water. The rain beat against my face and nearly blinded me, and a deep murmur arose from the intolerable wash of the waves. Before me lay only a furious and tortured immensity; behind my back was the warmth and security of my miniature castle, a mellow pipe and a book of valiant stories—but I couldn't ignore the menace of the loathsome shape that had pressed itself against the glass.

I descended three short steps to the rocks and made my way rapidly toward the rear of the lighthouse. Drops of rain more acrid than tears ran down my cheeks and into my mouth and dripped from the corners of my mustache. The overpowering darkness clung like a leech to my clothes. I hadn't gone twenty paces

before I came upon a motionless figure.

At first I saw nothing but the head and shoulders of a well-shaped man; but as I drew cautiously nearer I collided with something that made me cry out in terror. A hideous tentacle shot out and wound itself about my leg.

With a startled cry I turned and attempted to run. But out of the macrocarpus darkness leaped another slimy arm, and another. My fingers tightened on the revolver in my pocket. I whipped it out and opened fire on the writhing brutes.

The report of my gun echoed from the surrounding boulders. A sudden, shrill scream of agony broke the comparative quiet that followed. Then there came a voluble, passionate pleading. "Don't shoot again! Please don't! I'm done up. I was done up when I came here, and I wanted help! I didn't intend to harm you. Before God, I didn't intend that *they* should attack you. But I can't control 'em now. They're too much for me. *It's* too much for me. Pity me!"

For a moment I was too dazed to think. I stared stupidly at the smoking revolver in my hand and then my eyes sought the cataclysmic ocean. The enormous waves calmed me. Slowly I brought my eyes to bear on the thing before me.

But even as I stared at it my brain reeled again, and a deadly nausea came upon me.

"And then the youth drew away his robe and the Sultan perceived that he was a man only to his waist . . ."

Several feet from where I stood, a monstrous jelly spread itself loathsomely over the dripping rocks, and from its veined central mass a thousand tentacles depended and writhed like the serpents on the head of Medusa. And growing from the middle of this obscenity was the torso and head of a naked young man. His hair was matted and covered with sea-weed; and there were blood-stains upon his high, white forehead. His nose was so sharp that it reminded me of a sword and I momentarily expected to see it glitter in the dim, mysterious light. His teeth chattered so loudly that I could hear them from where I stood; and as I stared and stared at him he coughed violently and foamed at the lips.

"Whisky!" he muttered. "I'm all done up! I ran into a ship!"

I was unable to speak, but I believe I made some strange noises in my throat. The young man nodded hysterically.

"I knew you'd understand," he muttered. "I'm up against it, but I knew you'd help me pull through. A glass of whisky——"

"How did that thing get you?" I shrieked. I had found my voice at last, and was determined to fight my way back to sanity. "How did that thing get its loathsome coils on you?"

"It didn't get me," groaned the young man. "I'm *It!*"

"You're what?"

"A part of *It*," replied the young man.

"Isn't that thing swallowing you?" I screamed at him. "Aren't you going down into its belly at this moment?"

The young man sadly shook his head. "It's part of me," he said again, and then, more wildly, "I must have something to brace me up! I'm all in. I was swimming on the surface, and a ship came and cut off six of my legs. I'm weak from loss of blood, and I can't stand."

A lean hand went up and brushed the water from battered eyes. "A few of 'em are still lively," he said, "and I can't control 'em. They

nearly got you—but the others are all in. I can't walk on 'em."

With as much boldness as I could muster I raised my revolver and advanced upon the thing. "I don't know what you're talking about," I cried. "But I'm going to blow this monster to atoms."

"For heaven's sake, don't!" he shrieked. "That would be murder. We're a human being."

A flash of scarlet fire answered him. Almost unconsciously I had pressed upon the trigger, and now my weapon was speaking again. "I'll blow it to tatters!" I muttered between my teeth. "The vile, crawling devil!"

"Don't! don't!" shrieked the young man, and then an unearthly yell made the night obscene. I saw the thing before me quiver in all its folds, and then it suddenly rose up and towered above me. Blood spurted from its huge, bloated body, and a crimson shower descended upon me. High above me, a hundred feet in the air, I saw the pale, agonized face of the young man. He was screaming blasphemies. He appeared to be walking on stilts. "You can't kill me," he yelled. "I'm stronger than I thought. I'll win out yet."

I raised my revolver to fire again, but before I could take aim the thing swept by me and plunged into the sea. It was perhaps fortunate for me that I did not attempt to follow it. My knees gave beneath me and I fell flat upon my face. When I came to so far as to be able to speak I found myself between clean white sheets and staring into the puzzled blue eyes of a government inspector.

"You've had a nasty time of it, lad," he said. "We had to give you stimulants. Didja have a shock of a sort?"

"Of a sort, yes," I replied. "But it came out of the *Arabian Nights*."

6. *The Marvelous Boy*

[Curious Manuscript Found in a Bottle]

I was the marvelous boy. My genius amazed the world. A magnificent mind, a sublime destiny! My enemies . . . combined to ruin me. A punctured balloon . . .

A little box, and I put a dog under it. He changed . . . Jelly! Etheric vibration generates curious changes in living cells. . . . Process starts and nothing can stop it. Growth! Enormous growth! Keeps sending out shoots—legs! arms! Marvelous growth! Human being next. Put a little girl under it. She changed. Beautiful jellyfish! It kept getting larger. Fed it mice. Then I destroyed it.

So interesting. Must try it on myself. I know how to get back. Willpower. A child's will is too weak, but a man can get back. No actual change in cell-content.

A tremendous experience! I picked out a deep pool where I could hide. Hunger. Saw man on beach.

The police suspect. I must be more careful. Why didn't I take the body out to sea?

Horrible incident. Young lady artist. I almost caught her, but she stamped on a leg. Smashed it. Horrible pain. I certainly must be more careful.

Great humiliation. Little boy hooked me. But I gave him a scare. The varmint! I glared and glared at him. I tried to catch him, but he ran too fast. I wanted to eat him. He had very red cheeks. I hate women and children.

Of course they suspect. Little boys always babble. I wanted to eat him. But I gave them all a good scare, and I got a man. He came down after me in a diver's suit, but I got him. I took him to pieces. I mean that—lit-

grally to pieces. Then I let the fragments float up. I wanted to scare them. I think I did. They ran for their lives. The authorities are fools.

I got back. But it wasn't easy. The thing fought and fought. "I'm master!" I said, and it gulped. It gulped and gulped and gulped; and then I got back. But my hand was smashed and bleeding!

That fool clerk! Why did he take so long? But he didn't know how hungry his red face made me. The thing came back without the ray. I was standing before the counter and it came back. I sprang at him. I was lucky to get away.

Terrible trouble. I can't keep it from coming back. I wake up in the night, and find it spread out on the bed and all over the floor. Its arms writhe and writhe. And its demands are insatiable. Every waking moment it demands food. Sometimes it completely absorbs me. But now as I write the upper portion of my body is human.

This afternoon I moved to furnished room near beach. Salt water has become a necessity. Change comes on more rapidly now. I can't keep it off. My will is powerless. I filled the tub with water and put in some salt. Then I wallowed in it. Great comfort. Great relief. Hunger. Dreadful, insatiable hunger.

I am all beast, all animal. Rats. I have caught six rats. Delicious. Great comfort. But I've messed up the room. What if the old idiot downstairs should suspect?

She does suspect. Wants me to get out. I shall get out. There is only one refuge for me now. The sea! I shall go to the sea. I can't pretend I'm human any longer. I'm all animal, all beast. What a shock I must have given the old hag! I could hear her teeth chattering as she came up the stairs. All I could do to keep from springing at her.

Into the sea at last. Great relief, great joy. Freedom at last!

A ship. I ran head on into it. Six arms gone. Terrible agony. Flopped about for hours.

Land. I climbed over the rocks and collapsed. Then I managed to get back. Part of me got back. I called for help. A crazy fool came out of the lighthouse and stared at me. Five of my tentacles sprang at him. I couldn't control them. They got him about the leg. He lost his head. Got out a revolver and shot at them.

I got them under control. Tremendous effort. Pleaded with him, tried to explain. He would not listen. Shots—many shots. White-hot fire in my body—in my arms and legs. Strength returned to me. I rose up, and went back into the sea. I hate human beings. I am growing larger, and I shall make myself felt in the world.

ARTHUR ST. AMAND.

7. *The Salmon Fishermen*

[Statement of William Gamwell]

THERE were five of us in the boat: Jimmy Simms, Tom Snodgrass, Harry O'Brien, Bill Samson and myself. "Jimmy," I said, "we may as well open the lunch. I'm not particularly hungry, but the salmon all have their noses stuck in the mud!"

"They sure ain't biting," said Jimmy. "I never seen such a bum run of the lazy critters."

"Don't go complaining," Harry piped up. "We've only been here five hours."

We were drifting toward the east shore and I yelled to Bill to pull on the oars, but he ignored me.

"We'll drift in with the shipping," I warned. "By the way, what's that queer-looking tug with a broken smoke-stack?"

"It came in this morning," said Jim. "It looks like a rum-runner to me."

"They're taking an awful risk," Harry put in. "The revenue cutter's due by here any minute."

"There she is now," said Bill and pointed toward the flats.

Sure enough, there was the government boat, skirting the shore and looking like a lean wasp on the warpath. "She's heading the tug off as sure as you're born," said Bill. "I'll say we're in for a hot time!"

"Back water!" I shouted. "Do you want to get between 'em?"

Tom and Bill pulled sturdily on the oars and our boat swung out in the direction of the west shore; and then the current took us and carried us downstream.

A signal flag flashed for a moment on the deck of the cutter. Jimmy translated it for us. " 'Stand to, or we'll fire'," he exclaimed. "Now let's see what the tug's got to say to that!"

The tug apparently decided to ignore the command. It rose on a tremorless swell, and plunged doggedly forward. A vast black column ascended from its broken smokestack. "They're putting on steam!" cried Bill. "But they haven't a chance in the world."

"Not a chance," confirmed Tom. "One broadside will blow 'em to atoms."

Bill stood up and clapped his hands to his ears. The rest of us were nearly deafened by the thunderous report. "What did I tell you?" shouted Tom.

We look at the tug. The smokestack was gone and she was wallowing in a heavy swell. "That was only a single shot across her bows," said Bill. "But it did a lot of damage. Wait until they open fire with the big guns!"

We waited, expecting to see something interesting. But we saw something that nearly frightened us out of our shoes. Between the cutter and the tug a gigantic, yellowish obscenity shot up from the water and towered thirty feet in the air. It thrashed wildly about and made a horrible gulping noise. We could hear the frenzied shrieks of the men on the tug, and from the deck of the cutter someone yelled. "Look at it! Look at it! Oh, my God!"

"Mercy in heaven!" groaned Bill.

"We're in for it!" sobbed Tom.

For a moment the thing simply towered and vibrated between the two boats and then it made for the cutter. It had at least a thousand legs and they waved loathsomely in the sunlight. It had a hooked beak and a great mouth that opened and closed and gulped, and it was larger than a whale. It was horribly, hideously large. It towered to the mounting zenith, and in its mephitic, blasphemous immensity it dwarfed the two boats and all the tangled shipping in the harbor.

"Are we alive?" shrieked Bill. "And is that there shore really Long Island? I don't believe it. We're in the Indian Ocean, or the Persian Gulf or the middle of the Hyperborean sea. . . That there thing is a Jormungandar!"

"What's a Jormungandar?" yelled Tom. He was at the end of his rope and clutching valiantly at straws.

"Them things what live on the bottom of the arctic seas," groaned Bill. "They comes up for air once in a hundred years. I'll take my oath that there thing's a Jormungandar."

Jormungandar or not, it was apparent to all of us that the monster meant business. It was bearing down upon the cutter with incredible ferocity. The water boiled and bubbled in its wake. On the other boats men rushed hysterically to the rails and stared with wide eyes.

The officers of the cutter had recovered from their momentary as-

tonishment and were gesticulating furiously and running back and forth on the decks. Three guns were lowered into position and directed at the onrushing horror. A little man with gilt braid on his sleeves danced about absurdly on his toes and shouted out commands at the top of his voice.

"Don't fire until you can look into his eyes," he yelled. "We can't afford to miss him. We'll give him a broadside he won't forget."

"It isn't human, sir!" someone yelled. "There never was nothing like it before in this world."

The men aboard the tug were obviously rejoicing. Caps and pipes ascended into the air and loud shouts of triumph issued from a hundred drunken throats.

"Fire!" shouted the blue-coated midget on the cutter.

"It won't do 'em no good!" shouted Bill, as the thunder of the guns smote our ears. "It won't do 'em a bit o' good."

As it turned out, Bill was right. The tremendous discharge failed to arrest the progress of the obscene monster.

It rose like a cloud from the water and flew at the cutter like a flying-fish. Furiously it stretched forth its enormous arms, and embraced the cutter. It wrenched the little vessel, from the trough of the wave in which it wallowed and lifted it violently into the air.

Its great golden sides shone like the morning star, but red blood trickled from a gaping hole in its throat. Yet it ignored its wounds. It lifted the small steel ship into the air in its gigantic, weaving arms.

I shall never forget that moment. I have but to shut my eyes and it is before me now. I see again that Brobdingnagian horror from measureless abysses, that twisting, fantastic monstrosity from sinister depths of blackest midnight. And in its colossal arms and legs I see a tiny ship from whose deck a hundred little men fall shrieking and screaming into the black maelstrom beneath its churning maws.

Yards and yards it towered, and its glittering bulk hid the sun. It towered to the zenith and its weaving arms twisted the cutter into a shapeless mass of glistening steel.

"We're next!" muttered Bill. "There ain't nothing can save us now. A man ain't got a chance when he runs head-on against a Jormungandar!"

"That ain't no Jormungandar," piped Tom. "It's a human being what's been out all night. But I ain't saying we're not in for it."

My other companions fell upon their knees and little Harry O'Brien turned yellow under the gills. But the thing did not attack us. Instead, with a heartbreaking scream that seemed outrageously human it sank beneath the waves, carrying with it the flattened, absurd remains of the valiant little cutter and the crushed and battered bodies of innumerable men. And as it sank loathsomely from sight the water about it flattened out into a tremorless plateau and turned the color of blood.

Bill was at the oars now, shouting and cursing to encourage the rest of us. "Pull, boys," he commanded. "Let's try to make the south shore before that there fish comes up for breath. There ain't one of us here what wants to live for the rest of his life on the bottom of the sea. There ain't one of us here what ud care to have it out with a Jormungandar."

In a moment we had swung the boat about and were making for the shore. Men on the other ships were crying and waving to us, but we didn't stop to hand in any reports. We weren't thinking of anything

but a huge monstrosity that we would see towering and towering into the sky as long as our brains hung together in our foolish little heads.

8. News Item in the Long Island Gazette

THE body of a young man, about 25 years old, was found this morning on a deserted beach near Northport. The body was horribly emaciated and the coroner, Mr. E. Thomas Bogart, discovered three small wounds on the young man's thigh. The edges of the wounds were stained as though from gunpowder. The body scarcely weighed one hundred pounds. It is thought that the youth was the victim of foul play and inquiries are being made in the vicinity.

9. The Box of Horror

[Statement of Harry Olson]

I HADN'T had a thing to eat for three days, and I was driven to the cans. Sometimes you find something valuable in the cans and sometimes you don't; but anyhow, I was working 'em systematically. I had gone up the street and down the street, and hadn't found a thing for my pains except an old pair of suspenders and a tin of salmon. But when I came to the last house I stopped and stared. Then I stretched out a lean arm and picked up the box. It was a funny-looking box, with queer glass sides and little peek-holes in the side of it, and a metal compartment about three inches square in back of it, and a slide underneath large enough to hold a man's hand.

I looked up at the windows of the house, but there wasn't anyone watching me, and so I slipped the box under my coat and made off down the street. "It's something expensive, you can bet your life on that," I thought. "Probably some old doctor's croaked and his widow threw the thing away without consulting anyone. This is a real scientific affair, this is, and I ought to get a week's board out of it."

I wanted to examine the thing better and so I made for a vacant lot where I wouldn't be interrupted. Once there I sat myself down behind a signboard and took the contraption from under my coat and looked at it.

Well, sir, it interested me. There was a little lever on top of it you pressed and the slide fell down and something clicked in the metal box in back of it, and the thing lighted up.

I realized at once that something was meant to go on the slide. I didn't know just what, but my curiosity was aroused. "That light isn't there for nothing," I thought. "This box means business."

I began to wonder what would happen if something alive were put on the slide. There was a clump of bushes near where I was sitting and I got up and made for it. It took me some time to get what I was after; but when I caught it I held it firmly between my thumb and forefinger so it couldn't escape, and then I talked to it. "Grasshopper," I said. "I haven't any grudge against you personally, but the scientific mind is no respecter of persons."

The infernal varmint wriggled and wriggled and covered my thumb with molasses, but I didn't let up on him. I held him firmly and pushed him onto the slide. Then I turned on the lever and peeped through the holes.

The poor devil squirmed and fluttered for several minutes and then he began to dissolve. He got flabbier and flabbier and soon I could see right through him. When he was nothing but ooze he began to wriggle.

I dumped him on the ground and he scurried away faster than a centipede.

"I'm deluding myself," I thought. "I'm seeing things that never happened."

Then I did a very foolish thing. I thrust my hand into the box and turned on the lever. For several moments nothing happened and then my hand began to get cold. I peeped through the holes and what I saw made me scream and scream and draw my hand out and go running about the lot like a madman. My hand was a mass of writhing, twisting snakes! Leastwise, they looked like snakes at first, but later I saw that they were soft and yellow and rubbery and much worse than snakes.

But even then I didn't altogether lose my head. Leastwise, I didn't lose it for long. "This is a sheer hallucination," I said to myself, "and I'm going to argue myself out of it."

I sat down on a big boulder and held my hand up and looked at it. It had a thousand fingers and they dripped, but I made myself look at 'em. I did some tall arguing. "Snap out of it," I said. "You're imagining things!" I thought the fingers began to shorten and stiffen a little. "You're imagining all this," I continued. "It's the sheerest bunk. That box isn't anything out of the ordinary!"

Well sir, you may not believe it, but I argued myself back into sanity. I argued my hand back to normal. The wriggling, twisting things got shorter and fatter and joined together and before very long I had a hand with fingers.

Then I stood up and shouted. Luckily no one heard me, and there wasn't anyone to watch me dancing about on my toes either. When I got out of breath I picked the infernal box up and walked away with it. I made directly for the river. "You've had your day," I said. "You won't turn any more poor critters into jelly-fish!"

Well sir, I threw the vile thing into the river, but first I smashed it against the planks on the wharf until it looked like nothing on earth under the stars. "And that's the end of you!" I shouted as it sank. I ought to have got a medal for that, but I ain't complaining. It isn't every man has the pleasure of calling himself a disinterested benefactor of humanity.

The PHANTOM PHOTOPLAY

by TERVA GASTON HUBBARD

"He lifted her high above his head and with a mighty heave threw her clear to the side-wall of the tent."

MARTINI is dead! I gazed at the headlines dumbly. If I had been a woman I'd have cried. Hundreds of women did. Thus it was that the bud of fame was clipped from the life-bush by Time's ruthless pruning knife.

I arose from my canvas chair, picked it up by the high-back and read the sign painted thereon: "Stanley Milton, Assistant Director." I sighed. That sign I would keep for a souvenir of my short reign in the Kleig-light kingdom of the great director Parmelee.

I knew that I was not liked, though I didn't know why. I knew that my job would pass with the passing of Parmelee's super-picture, *The Reign of the Rajo.* And now, a million dollars were wasted, five thousand people were thrown out of work, and Stanley Milton would lose his position, because one man, Rosoff Martini, idolized by women and envied by men, had died.

Martini had been friendly with me. Perhaps that was why I'd been made assistant. We belonged to the same athletic club, attended the same affairs, played in the same poker games, and admired the same "master," O. Henry. His admiration for O. Henry, I surmised, was one merely of amused respect while mine approached idolatry. I was a slave to the O. Henryesque, to the surprize, the sudden turn. There had never been a hitch in our friendship until one day . . . I borrowed five dollars.

Who's Who proclaimed Martini an Italian, but somewhere under that

Greek profile, that olive skin, and hair of brilliant jet, I'm sure there lurked a bit of Jerusalem because——

Well, in the first place I hate to borrow money, but in the second place I positively abhor giving it back, and it is because of this latter eccentricity that I hesitate to borrow. But when you're out on location in an immature desert and you've just dedicated your whole stack of blues to a straight and someone disrespects your dedication with four queens, why, a man has to do something to retaliate.

So I borrowed five dollars from Martini.

Martini had won the pot before the dedication or he'd never have let me have it, but he couldn't very well refuse a loan of five dollars when he had four stacks of blues and two stacks of reds and whites.

This desert I spoke of was the stretch of rolling sand that lies between Del Rey and Venice, about a quarter of a mile from the ocean, and when a couple of tents had been erected and a dozen palms imported from the studio storehouse it made a vast Sahara where Abd-El-Krim himself would have been proud to cache his stolen women.

It was on this location that Martini first developed signs of the infirmity that finally led up to the headlines on the paper I had in my hand. He was doing the bedroom scene with Hazel Donner—a brand new star just graduated from a beauty pageant—in which there was the usual brief struggle of young womanhood protecting her virtue from the magnificent brute. He had to lift her up bodily and fling her to the divan, a distance of about eight feet, and as the utmost care had to be exercised to prevent injury to Miss Donner, the entire strain of the piece of business fell upon Martini.

Martini's usual way of working was to walk through his "business" with Miss Donner under Parmelee's direction without emotionalizing, let her get absolutely "set," and then when Parmelee was ready to "shoot," do his "business" from inspiration. This inspirational work always turned out more satisfactorily than the usual "grind." But on this particular Tuesday Martini and I and four others had poker-faced until 4 a. m. and—I had borrowed that five dollars.

I don't know whether it was the five dollars, the lack of sleep or the heat that put Martini in a bad humor. But anyway, he couldn't get his inspiration to work and they'd gone through the "throwing business" until the divan and Miss Donner were nearly wrecked, not to speak of the Raja himself. Parmelee's voice grew louder, and the more he barked the darker became the scowl on Martini's face. Finally, in a terrific effort to "caveman" Hazel Donner, he lifted her high above his head, shouting, "By God! I'll get it right this time!" which wasn't the scene caption at all, and with a mighty heave threw her clear to the side-wall of the tent.

Miss Donner wasn't hurt, just scared a bit. Luckily the tent wall was staked down to keep the wind from flapping it and she'd bounded back and landed full length on the divan. It was a marvelous bit of "business" and the climax of the scene, and Parmelee was so overjoyed that he hardly noticed the crumpled Raja on the cushioned floor. Martini often lay down to rest after a hard scene.

But I had a faculty for finding trouble. There was something awkward about the position in which he lay, and Martini was never awkward, on the set or off. I walked over, feeling constrained to humor him because of that five dollars. His eyes were closed, his lips pressed so tightly together that they were pale through the rouge. That didn't in-

dicate much—probably anger. I couldn't see the olive skin through the grease paint on the set features, but—his ears were white, dead-white.

"Call Dr. Grey!" I shouted. It was orders like that, which I gave without consulting Parmelee, that made my job unsafe.

An hour later Martini lay, still unconscious, in the Oil Refinery's Emergency Hospital at El Segundo, a station just south of Del Rey.

Dr. Paxton, the surgeon, was on his way from Los Angeles. Dr. Paxton was a specialist. It was a small matter to him. A little ether, a little snipping and cutting, the cursory examination of a small hard object, a few stitches and a bill in due time reading, "Removal of Appendix—$1,000.00." Dr. Paxton always charged that amount.

Dr. Paxton had never lost a patient. But, perhaps he too had played poker until late Tuesday morning. Dr. Grey thought he had been careless.

Dr. Grey was merely a physician. Dr. Paxton was a surgeon. However, Dr. Paxton called in Dr. Graham. Dr. Graham called in Dr. Maxwell. Dr. Maxwell called in Dr. Myers. The bill doubled, tripled, quadrupled, but consultation after consultation failed to stop the pleurisy, which was followed by septoendocarditis, peritonitis and——

I looked again at the headlines on the paper. It was a *Record* "Extra." I could hear shouts outside the deserted studio. Boys were calling other "Extras." The death of Martini was worth a dozen "Extras," while if I died I'd get one line in the obituary column of the evening paper. It wasn't right. I didn't mind dying, but before I stepped out of the picture I must see at least one photoplay title followed by the caption, "Directed by Stanley Milton." I must. And I would—somehow.

I read the paragraph in bold type under the picture of Rosoff Martini: "Mr. Martini was insured for $1,000,000, which only partly covers the loss sustained by Cinemagraph Company on the unfinished picture, 'The Reign of the Raja,' which was two-thirds complete. Martini's estate is left to his brother."

I hadn't known there was a brother.

So Rosoff, dead, was worth a million to Cinemagraph. An odd thought struck me. I laughed. Rosoff, dead, was worth a *five* to me. I still owed Martini five dollars. He had once said at a banquet in a moment of eloquence, "I always pay my debts, and I always collect them—*one way or another.*" The last four words had a pugnacious sound, but I couldn't imagine the handsome Raja *fighting* for anything except in one of Parmelee's tempestuous scenes.

I LEFT the deserted set, walked through the outer office and stood in the doorway leading to the street. The whole place seemed to be in mourning. Even the office girl was missing. I walked over to the swivel chair behind the desk and sat down. I'd enjoy my last day in Cinemagraph's employ. For once I'd be king. I propped my feet upon the roll-topped desk. From my hip pocket I dragged my cigarettes. They were crushed, but I took little note of that. A five-dollar bill was wrapped around the package. Its green was soiled by the burn of a cigarette. I recognized it as the bill I had borrowed from Martini. I wondered how it had gotten out of the bill-fold where I had placed it with the others that I won—after the *dedication.*

Then I laughed. Here was one debt that Martini would never collect—one way or another.

Somehow I began to realize that I never had been a friend to the Italian. He had been only a tool by which I should accomplish my ambi-

tion. Now that he was dead it didn't matter *one way or another* and—I still had that five dollars. That thought rolled through my mind till I was feverish.

A shadow shut the sunlight from the doorway. I looked up from the five-dollar bill. The shadow was Rosoff Martini!

Hastily I crumpled the five in my hand. He would never get it. Never. The boaster! The braggart! He always collected his debts! Then I laughed again, a loud, unnatural laugh. How could I laugh naturally in the presence of this man? He was dead!

Martini's face was immobile. "Hello, Stanley," said the lips. He disregarded my laughter.

I was afraid of that frozen face, and those eyes without a gleam of light. I tried to jest. "Why don't you lie down?" I asked.

His lips moved again, "Why?"

"You're dead! Why don't you lie down?" I tried to bellow with laughter but my throat was dry.

"No," was all he said.

I showed him the paper. He read the headlines without taking it from me. I was perspiring, brow and body; even my hands were dripping hot liquid. Events raced through my mind. Perhaps I had caused the death of Martini. I had borrowed the five dollars. That had put him in a bad humor. He had strained himself and—died. I clinched my hands tighter. Something was between them. I looked down to see blood, and saw—a five-dollar bill. I felt eyes boring into me. I unclinched my hands and flung the crumpled greenback against the wall.

"Take it and go!" I screamed.

His eyes did not leave me.

"I have come to finish my brother's picture," he said.

That calmed my mind. For ten minutes I talked to the man I would have sworn was Martini if I hadn't known Martini was dead.

Finally I asked, "Does anyone else know your resemblance to your brother?"

"No," said the lips, "they think we're the same person."

"Would you mind working for me instead of Parmelee?" I dared to say.

"You *were* Parmelee, on this last picture. You"—he paused significantly—"and the master, O. Henry."

I was surprized and pleased. He continued:

"And besides, you were my brother's—friend." He hesitated on the word.

"Yes, his best," I assented quickly. I had formulated a plan by which I would gain my ambition. Only one thing lay in the way. Money! As if in answer to my thoughts there came this statement.

"Don't worry about money. My brother's estate falls to me and I, too, have some of my own."

"It'll take half a million," I said, breathing fast.

"Easy," was the answer. Things were going too smoothly.

"Why," I asked suddenly, "are you so willing to do this?"

"I am like you," he answered coldly: "I want fame. I have money. I have looks. I want fame. You have the ability to finish that picture. Unfinished, it is worthless. You can buy it for a song. I'll pay for it."

This wasn't the plan I had in mind. It was better.

"But everyone knows you are dead," I said without thinking. I laughed at my mistake. "I mean your brother."

"Good advertising," he stated. "Martini comes back from the grave to finish his picture!" Then he almost smiled. "You know I'm to be buried next week."

I marveled. This man was a genius. But he was heartless. He

would do anything to take his brother's place. Suddenly a wild thought struck me. I paused significantly.

"How did you kill your brother?" I said between set teeth.

"I poisoned him," was the calm answer.

"Suppose I tell," I suggested, surprized at my own calmness.

"You won't," was the quick reply.

"Why?"

"Because you've too much at stake. You've a chance at fame, as I have. When you buy the picture it is yours. Parmelee has no more call upon it. You won't tell. You were glad my brother died because you owed him five dollars. You won't tell."

I gasped, "How did you know?"

"I know you won't tell." He combined the two speeches.

"No. I won't," I said, and picked up the five-dollar bill.

With Martini's money I bought the picture. Parmelee laughed at me when he heard about it. "Get out O. Henry's Scrap Book," he taunted, "and give *my* work a new twist." My muscles tightened, not at the bidding of my own will but at that of another, my master. I controlled the desire to choke Parmelee. Words hissed through my teeth; I could not keep them back; "I *will* give it a new twist."

I started my sensational advertising. I rented the studio for two weeks, rehired the supporting cast at a cut in salary, and began "shooting." The only trouble I had was in the scenes with Miss Donner. She complained about "working with a dead man." My advertising had its effect.

"He's not really dead," I argued. "Can't you see it's a stunt?"

"He *is* dead," she insisted. "His lips are cold as ice."

There's no arguing with a woman. I knew it was the man's nature to be cold. Hadn't he poisoned his own brother?

The day Martini was buried his brother didn't show up at the studio. At first I was puzzled, then furious. And the following morning when he arrived on the set I began, "Why the devil weren't you——?"

He cut me short.

"My dear Stanley," he almost drawled, "you can't expect a man to miss his own funeral."

I was in a fever. This mixup in personalities was getting on my nerves.

But finally, after ten days, the picture was finished. I hadn't allowed Parmelee within sight of the studio, and instructed all employees to absolute secrecy. I had to discharge one man to teach the rest a lesson. I had the whole supporting cast believing that Martini was a phenomenal "double."

In another week the picture was ready for release. I heard rumors from the cutting room that there was something queer about the film and I took Martini with me to look at it. The film seemed all right. The figures were as clean-cut as any I'd ever seen.

"What's the matter with it?" I asked.

"Nothing, only"—answered the cutter, looking queerly at Martini—"in Martini's scene with Miss Donner you can't see——"

He didn't finish. His eyes widened like saucers and he fell forward in my arms.

"Fainted," stated Martini coldly. "Too hot in that cutting room. You see there's nothing wrong with the film. Just his overtaxed mind."

He held the film up for my inspection. I could see nothing wrong.

"Let's go to dinner," said Martini, "or we'll be late for the preview. It's 6:15 now."

"George," I called. George was my assistant. I had given him my

canvas chair with his name printed on the back.

"Yes," said George, always at hand.

"See that everything is set for the preview at 8:30."

"Right!" said George.

THE Four Hundred of Hollywood were at the preview en masse. In fact there were as many in the street as there were inside.

"We should have hired an opera house," said Martini, who was in good spirits.

I tried to be the same, but something seemed amiss. I felt that the air brooded expectancy. I was cold and uneasy when I should have been glorying in my coming fame.

I left Martini in his seat and rushed up to the projecting room.

"Is everything all right?" I asked breathlessly.

"All ready to go," was the answer. "I'm running the O. Henry story first."

I was startled. "O. Henry!" I stared.

"Yes. An O. Henry two-reeler. We've previewed two before. This one is taken from his short story, *The Unfinished*——"

"Run *The Reign of the Raja* first," I cut in. "That's the feature. O. Henry can wait."

It was almost unholy to put aside my master like that, but I was burning to see *my* work on the silver screen.

I flew to my seat on the aisle. It was taken by one of the crowd. Martini's seat was occupied, but not by himself. I looked around bewildered. "Polite, all of a sudden, to give up his seat like that," I muttered.

I could feel the eyes of Hollywood's aristocracy upon me. I bowed —silly of me to bow from the aisle— I should have waited for the end of the picture. Maybe someone had pushed me over into that foolish bow. A titter flowed over the house and from some spot one hysterical cackle. I hastened to the rear of the house, and from the "Standing Room Only" watched the unfolding of my masterpiece.

I had left unchanged the part of the picture directed by Parmelee and added that of my own, but the opening captions read, "Directed by Stanley Milton." After all, the credit was mine. Why share it?

I heard comments all about me as the plot unfolded, but the part in which I was intensely interested, my part, had not arrived. As my first scene drew near I looked hastily about for Martini. It was impossible to find him in that sea of faces. I read the caption of my big scene between Miss Donner and Martini's men where she is brought back after her escape from his tent. It was good. I liked it. So did the audience, I was sure. They were spellbound.

Martini's men begin the salaam, backing out the front of the tent and leaving Miss Donner expectantly awaiting the entrance of the Raja. This was the second big love scene, and equal to the "throwing scene" that had evidently caused the death of Martini. There was an expectant hush as the tent-flap was drawn back by an unseen hand. A close-up showed the look of horror in the eyes of Hazel Donner. Then, Miss Donner played her tremendous emotional scene—*alone upon the screen.* The tent-flap had drawn back, but *no one appeared.* Hazel Donner beat someone's breast, but *no one could be seen.* She was picked up sobbing and carried to the inner room, but *no one carried her.*

The audience was gasping. And I —I was paralyzed.

A flood of cold air passed over me. That one hysterical cackle was repeated—in my ear. I looked around.

Staring eyes and gaping mouths were all turned toward the screen. A woman beside me automatically fanned herself. I could smell sweat; someone was reeking with it. But I was cold—cold.

Dimly I heard the clicking in the projecting room above me. Something clammy passed across my eyes and left them watery. I shrank back, closing them. Through my quivering lids I saw the words, "one way or another."

I forced my eyes open and stared again at the screen. Miss Donner was still being carried—*and no one carried her*.

Suddenly I remembered I was the director. Martini was late for his cue. He should have come into the picture when the flap of the tent drew back. Why didn't he? I heard that cackle in my ear.

"You don't expect a man to miss his own funeral?"

"Martini!" I shouted, whirling. "Get on the set. You're late. Get in the picture!" And louder, "Martini! For God's sake, you'll ruin me! Martini!"

I felt eyes, hundreds of eyes, staring. The whole house was on its feet leering back at me. I could *hear* the silence. I leaned against the wall for support.

A laugh sounded in front of me. "That new twist," someone barked. "Page O. Henry." It was Parmelee.

I was weak. Something was pulling at my knees. I lost all enmity for Parmelee. A feeling of compassion for those who didn't know the master surged over me.

"Parmelee," I said gently, knowing he would *never* understand, "you don't need to page O. Henry. He is *here*." My hand sought my heart, and stayed there.

"So he is," barked Parmelee, looking flippantly toward the screen.

The Unfinished Story, an O. Henry two-reeler, had begun.

THE SWAMP

By CRISTEL HASTINGS

Night settles swiftly with its ghostly tread
Over the tangled swamp where trees lie dead,
Their stumps upright, like lonely shapes of men
Long lost in wet morass and shadowed glen.

A silence broods over the sodden aisles
Of lifelessness that stretch for aching miles
Beyond a moor where clouds hang, gray and cold,
Sinister roofing for a pond grown old.

Night gropes with ease about the stealthy weed
That sucks its life, a tawny, wind-blown reed,
From sodden flooring where mosquitoes hum
Their high soprano to the frogs' shrill drum.

Here Is the Last Part of

The Dark Chrysalis

By ELI COLTER

The Story So Far

SAUL BLAUVETTE, working in his laboratory with John Cloud and Henry Arn, discovers the microbe of cancer—a germ shaped like a devil-fish, that is visible only when stained with a combination of red and blue dye. He finds that both his mother and Henry Arn are tainted with the cancer-microbe, and works feverishly to find a cure for the dread disease. He is spurred on by Helene Kinkaid's faith in him. He cures guinea-pigs of cancer by injecting into their veins a serum made of ether, water and rattlesnake poison. Henry Arn takes the serum, and as he is apparently recovering, Saul is persuaded to give the serum to his mother. Then to his horror he finds that the serum has killed Henry Arn.

THE four living in the room froze to stunned unbelief. Saul stared wildly at Arn's still white face, dumbly, like a man in a trance. His voice rose to a frantic scream.

"God! What have I done! Damn, damn, damn the stuff! I have killed my mother!" He hurled the bottle and needle from him savagely, crashing them against the floor, and the odor of ether rose in the air as he rushed from the room.

The three he left behind looked at each other with terrified eyes as they heard his feet go running away from the laboratory down the hard-packed path into the night.

"He'll do something desperate!" Cloud cried shakily.

"No," Mrs. Blauvette answered with a strange serenity, a calm they could not understand. "He will go to Helene."

Whittly started. It was the first time he had ever heard her mention the girl's name. Helene had told him something of the strained silence that had existed between her and Saul's mother from the first, and he had kept what he knew to himself. But he felt intuitively that Mrs. Blauvette was right. Saul had gone to Helene.

"She will hold him steady if anyone can," he said, forcing himself to speak calmly. "We must take care of Arn. Mrs. Blauvette, are you too tired to give us a little aid?"

"No. I think I shall never be tired again." She smiled, and Whittly saw her meaning in her face. "But I am not afraid. Already the pain has lessened in my side. Death lay so close ahead anyway. What does it matter? It is worth so much to be free from pain. But you two must be kind to Saul. He will need you, and he will need—Helene. I wish—I wish I could have seen her."

"Oh, here, Mrs. Blauvette, we needn't take that view of it," Whittly cut in briskly. "We must hang on to hope, at least. There are a number of things to think of. Arn was much nearer the end of his rope than you. It may be that he was simply in too far advanced a stage to be saved. The human body is a great machine. Give it half a chance and it will accomplish wonders, heal from incredible wounds and ravages. But it's like any other machine—it *can* be worn too badly for any repair. That may very logically have been the case with Arn."

"Yes, I had thought of that." Mrs. Blauvette nodded, turning to look at Cloud. "Do you have anything to offer, John?"

"I don't exactly know." Cloud frowned and hesitated. "But there may be something in this, too. It has acted on Henry exactly as 510 acted

This story began in WEIRD TALES for June

on the animals. Perhaps the human body needs a greater percentage of the ether. We've always got to experiment on the human in the last test, you know, harsh as it sounds. Else, how can we know? But I rather fancy that Doc's hypothesis is pretty nearly correct."

"We're going to believe that, anyway," Whittly asserted positively. "And we're going to strive to forget ourselves for a while in taking care of Henry."

"Can't we get him out of the house?" Cloud suggested. "Wouldn't it be better if Saul didn't see him here when he returns? We can't bury him tonight, but at least we can move him from here. We could take him to your office temporarily. I could go get the car. If Saul came back before we did he wouldn't miss the auto—he never uses it, you know. He'd rather walk, any time."

"Your suggestion may be a good one, but we don't dare act on it." Whittly glanced at Mrs. Blauvette, hesitating, then decided to give them both full cognizance of what was stirring in the town. "I haven't spoken of it to you before, because there was nothing to be gained by it, and because I didn't think there was any real danger. But the town is fanatically incensed over the mystery that surrounds this laboratory. They are threatening to raise a mob, come out here and burn the buildings down. Let alone, I believe such a sentiment will die out of itself—simply wear itself out. But the people are too badly aroused for us to dare taking any chances. Should anyone see us carrying a dead body away from here in the night, the town would be upon us in an hour. No—we'll have to keep Henry here, but we'll move him into the laboratory for tonight, where Saul won't see him as he comes into the house. And we'll lock that door to keep Saul out of there." Whittly nodded at the door down the hall, the one door which connected the living rooms with the laboratory.

"Good Lord! I didn't know there was any kind of dissatisfaction with us in the town. Does Saul know?" Cloud looked from Whittly to Mrs. Blauvette, startled.

"He does not. Helene knows, but we agreed it was wisest not to tell him. We both thought he had enough to worry about without our adding to it. And then we both believe it will blow over."

"But what's the matter with them?" Mrs. Blauvette asked sharply. "Saul hasn't been bothering them in any way. He has been attending strictly to his own business."

"Yes, that's just it. He's been attending *too* strictly to his own business," Whittly returned with dry sarcasm. "They want to attend to it for him. They resent his secrecy. You know how people are in the aggregate, how they look on scientific experimenting. They don't understand. They imagine a thousand and one ghastly impossibilities. Granted, the real experiments are nearly always ghastly enough, but they multiply them tenfold."

"Well, why *shouldn't* Saul keep his work an absolute secret?" Cloud demanded, irritated at the thought of any intrusion on the part of the populace. "It seems to me it was the only thing to do."

"I quite agree with you." Whittly smiled rather grimly. "But the people don't. They think Saul has been up to all sorts of terrible things, and they're about ready to wreck this place. It's a perfectly logical thing to expect, given the mob spirit once aroused and stirred over something they don't understand. But we're giving the matter too much thought entirely and——"

"We're going to give it a little more thought," Cloud cut in. "We need to. Somebody is going to meet with an unpleasant surprize if the

people start anything like that. I've got a gun over here in my trunk—and it's loaded for business."

"Good enough. I have one myself," Whittly approved. "I've been carrying it for the last week, every time I came out here. But we may be fretting over a remote contingency that will never mature into a crisis. Mrs. Blauvette—if you'll get me an old sheet? We'll make poor Henry ready for his last sleep."

Down through the night Saul raced, across the little hill that breathed the spirit of the girl he loved and into the little town. Not even in the streets did he stay his pace, but rushed headlong on to the house where Helene Kinkaid lived. Many an eye watched him go, and many a brain already harassed by dark suspicions regarding that laboratory in the trees took fire at the sight of him running mad and hatless through the thoroughfare. By the time he reached Helene's door more than a dozen people had collected into a following train, rushing to keep him in sight, taking the opposite side of the street to prevent his noticing their interest in him. Such precaution was unnecessary. In his state of mind he would have noticed nothing less than an earthquake.

He reached the house where Helene lived, leaped up the steps and threw himself headlong at the door. Helene heard the pound of his fists, and the cry of his voice calling her. She dropped the book she had been reading and rushed to admit him.

"Helene!" he cried, as she opened the door and he saw her startled face. "Come with me to the hill!"

"What's wrong? Saul! You look like a corpse!" The girl caught his shoulder and strove to shake him into coherent attention. "What's wrong?"

"Henry"—Saul gasped, but his voice carried clearly to the straining ears across the street—"Henry's dead and I've killed my mother!"

"Saul—no! No!"

"It's true! I'm half insane! Come out to the hill with me!"

He grasped her arm, pulling her toward him and down the steps, drawing her to keep pace with his furiously hurrying feet as he turned her toward the little birch-clad hill. Neither of them saw the horror-frozen group of people huddled in the shadows across the street, people who turned their heads to stare at each other in incensed dismay at the import of his words. Saul and Helene went hurrying on, stricken to dumbness with their own terrible problem, while the group of people behind them broke and ran rapidly in the opposite direction to spread the hideous thing Saul had said.

Upon the little hilltop Saul threw himself on the ground, buried his head in Helene's lap, gripped her convulsively with his arms and poured out the story of the last few terrible hours at the laboratory. She held him, listening in panic. Her heart shook smotheringly as he finished what he had to tell.

"And now what am I going to do?" Saul's throat choked shut, and he quivered from head to foot.

"You are coming with me." Helene drew him to his feet by sheer force with her strong hands, looked intently into his face and pointed down the hill toward the laboratory. "Dr. Whittly is sane, he will keep his head, but Cloud will need you—he must be about crazed, too. And your mother will need us both. We can't think of ourselves, now. We've got to think of your mother."

"Helene, where are you going?"

"I am going at last where I have always wanted to be, where I belong. I am going into your workroom with you, and into the crisis to walk through with you to the end. I am going into that laboratory, to see if

we can find some way out of this terrible disaster that seems to have descended upon us. There may be some wild mistake. There may be some shred of hope yet. God does not desert his own!" She tugged at his arm and started down the hill. "I am going to your mother."

BACK in the town the alarmists had raced from house to house, with shouts and angry cries, broadcasting the thing they had heard, gathering new recruits as they surged on. Over the streets from tongue to tongue flashed the report, gathering ugly significance and rousing flaming fury as it spread. Women stayed behind, trailing the skirts of the mob, shouting to each other the infamy that must be avenged, their outraged sense of fanatical anger rising.

Saul Blauvette had come tearing through the night, calling that Kinkaid girl who worked in Whittly's office, crying that the man Arn was dead and that he had killed his mother! They had been right all along! Hideous things went on in that mystery-shrouded laboratory! No wonder those fiends had kept their work an utter secret! They were experimenting on human beings!

As they gathered and rushed on toward the end of the town, the enraged minds of the people composing that wild mob envisioned unspeakable things. They saw people shut in that grim-walled building, cut into pieces and tortured to satisfy the gloating curiosity of merciless monsters. They saw bodies and bones and hideous bestial rites. They saw all the horrible things that lie in the purlieus of subconscious thought, ready to be roused into ghoulish life by inflamed brains. They poured down the street wildly, shrieking their indignation, picking up sticks and stones and any destructive missiles that came within reach of their hands.

On to the laboratory! Batter it, wreck it, tear it to splinters! Burn it to the ground! If Saul Blauvette burned with it, little matter! The ghastly, mystery-shrouded, ghost-ridden building must go!

Down through the streets and out of the little town they surged, half running in their spirit of destructive rage, jostling each other, trampling each other, cursing the great barnlike structure that few of them had ever seen. And five of the men in that crazed throng carried waste and cans of inflammable oil. And three of them carried, knowing it, cancers that ate into their living flesh, drove them sick with terror, and rushed them to the yawning grave from which none had been able to save their ravaged bodies.

WHITTLY and Cloud walked with slow, solemn steps into the lighted laboratory, carrying reverently between them the sheeted body of Henry Arn. Mrs. Blauvette stood in the doorway and watched as they paused by a bottle-littered table.

"Mrs. Blauvette, will you clear away some of this rubbish so that we can lay Henry here?" Whittly knew the value of busy hands, when the brain is harassed by things beyond control.

Mrs. Blauvette hurried forward, brushed the bottles aside and made clear a space large enough to accommodate the body. Gently Whittly and Cloud laid down the man who had come, as he said, to give his life for science in this place. As they turned to leave the laboratory, Cloud paused and gestured at a shelf and another table covered with numberless bottles.

"Doc, that's 511. There are gallons of it there. Saul and I were so sure of what we had found at last that we made up enough to inject a hundred thousand people. And that big jug contains unadulterated rattle-

snake poison: the cans by it are ether cans—sufficient material there to make enough 511 to immunize the world to cancer—Saul and I were getting ready *for* the world. The stuff may be worthless—and it may be the answer to Saul's dream after all. Suppose that bunch of fanatics in town should get up a mob and come out here in the next few days, before we have time to determine the value of the solution——"

"Yes, you're right," Whittly cut in, turning with businesslike briskness to Mrs. Blauvette. "John's got a wise idea, and we'd better act on it. If you'll help us, we'll carry the 511 and all the raw materials out of here and lock up the laboratory. But where the devil are we going to put the stuff?"

"Out in the garage," John Cloud offered quickly. "It stands back a hundred yards in the trees—Saul wouldn't have the stink of the gasoline near the laboratory. As if a fellow could ever smell it in this stench! But the 511 would probably be safe back there. If they did come out here and attack the laboratory they'd never think of going out to wreck the garage, too. Frankly, I don't think we've got a thing to worry about. I don't think they'll ever come near here. It's all talk."

"Well, I rather look at it that way myself, but caching the solution is a wise precaution." Whittly stepped to the table and began filling his arms with the bottles numbered 511. "We'll carry it into the house first, and then move it on to the garage."

They worked quickly and efficiently, anxious to have the task off their hands, and in short time the bottles were moved to the living rooms, the lights extinguished in the big laboratory, and the door locked between. Henry Arn lay in the dark hush of the place where he had done his life's mad work, at peace, alone. Then the three began carrying the solution on to the garage. They had moved all of it but one last small armful which Cloud was gathering up, when they heard the footsteps of Saul and Helene running up the path outside. All of them turned to glance at the door, startled, as the scientist and the girl burst into their presence.

"Mother!" Saul stared imploringly into the eyes of the tall, gaunt woman who had been silently praying for his return, and his hand gripped the girl's arm. "Mother, I have brought you Helene."

Tense silence fell over the room, the silence seeming to belong to that grim place. The two women looked into each other's eyes, and the three men stood hushed and waiting as Helene spoke.

"I have come to you in the hour of death, and in the hour of life. We both so love your son—we both must see him through. I will not believe that Saul has failed. There must be some terrible mistake."

"No. There can be no mistake." Mrs. Blauvette shook her head in a slow gesture of denial, and something like relief lit her eyes as she studied the girl's face. "I am glad that you have come. I have wanted to see the woman who will stand by my son—when I shall have passed. I am content. But there can be no mistake. Henry Arn gave himself the solution 511. Saul gave it to me. And Henry Arn is dead."

"Do you believe in God?" Helene's mouth quivered. She took a step toward Saul's mother, holding her gaze with desperate calmness. "I tell you God has been leading Saul. He will not fail him now. He sent Saul to save the world!"

"Maybe He sent you here, to save us all," Mrs. Blauvette answered steadily. "He works in mysterious ways. And if He sent you here, He will lead you on. Still your mind and think—does it come to you what we may do?"

The girl stood motionless, her eyes wide, straining for some tangible thought, and as she so stood, staring into the older woman's face, Saul noticed the bottles in Cloud's arms and asked abruptly, "What are you doing with the 511?"

Cloud hesitated and glanced at Whittly. The old doctor nodded.

"Yes, tell him. It's time he knew."

"Time I knew what?" Saul's eyes bored into Cloud's.

"Why, it may amount to nothing, Saul, but Whittly tells me the town is pretty badly aroused, up in arms over the laboratory." Helene caught her breath in a sharp gasp, and her gaze leaped to Saul's great slate-gray eyes, but Cloud went on quietly: "They don't like it because we've been so secretive, and are imagining all sorts of ridiculously horrible things as going on out here. They threaten to come out and wreck the place. Doc and I thought we'd better move the solution to the garage where it would be safe in case the people should become fanatical enough to mob the buildings. We've moved it all but this."

"I want to see a bottle of it!" Helene's voice cut in, and she stepped toward Cloud, holding out her hand. Wonderingly Cloud gave her one of the small bottles, and she turned it over in her fingers, looking at it closely. Suddenly she wheeled on Saul. "Where's the bottle Henry used? Get it, quickly!"

"Why? What does it matter which he used?" Saul frowned in puzzlement. "They're all alike."

"Don't question her," Mrs. Blauvette commanded, her eyes still on the girl's face. "I tell you she was *sent;* go get her the bottle. It's on the window-sill in Henry's room, where he left it."

Saul started in surprize, but went to get the bottle without a backward look, and three pairs of eyes centered on Helene intently, as though awaiting some miracle, as he returned and placed the bottle in her hand. She examined it closely, holding it up to the other one she had received from Cloud. The two bottles were identical, both numbered plainly in small inked figures, 511. She put them both in her left hand, holding her forefinger between them to keep from confusing them with each other, and pulled the corks with her right hand. She sniffed lightly at the small glass necks, and abruptly her eyes lit with a high light. Again she wheeled on Saul.

"How did it act on Henry Arn? Tell me!"

"It acted exactly as 510 acted on the animals," Saul answered, dazed by the expression on her face.

"Yes, it certainly did," Cloud put in. "I can vouch for that. Mrs. Blauvette can verify that that is what I told her a while ago."

"Oh, there's no doubt of its action," Saul returned. "If it had been 510 that Henry took, I'd know that we'd won the day. I'd know beyond all doubt that the action carried through into humans precisely the same. Helene! What is it? What do you think? What do you *know?*"

"It *was* 510 that Henry used!" The girl held the two bottles toward him, her eyes aflame. "Smell them—the one Henry used contains no ether!"

With a loud cry Saul leaped toward her and snatched the bottles, raising them alternately to his nostrils.

"God!" He turned a whitened countenance to his mother. "She's right! See that small bubble—that flaw on the edge of this bottle-neck? It's queerly shaped—like a cross. I remember! I took this bottle down to empty the 510 out of it and refill it with 511. John called me out, and I went and left it standing there. I'd already marked it 511, and we were so badly used up and excited that I

forgot to go back and change the solution in it. The cross—the cross on the neck! Apropos! A cross! Henry died in vain!"

"No—he did not die in vain! He died for the cause he slaved to bring to fulfilment. He died for the world. He died that you might know, beyond all doubt. He died that others might live!" Mrs. Blauvette's voice rose in an exultant cry as she stepped swiftly forward, caught the girl in her arms and turned to her son. "See! 510 acted the same on him as it did on the animals. You and John both said it. Then 511 will act on humans—on me—the same as it did on the guinea-pig! Saul—you have saved mankind from hell! I know! And Helene was sent to save us all when we were crazed with fear!"

"For God's sake, listen! What's that?" Whittly caught Saul's arm and turned toward the window, his face paling. Tense silence flashed over the room, and five people held their breaths, listening.

Outside in the night, down the road toward the laboratory, came the tramp of hurrying, ruthless feet. The sound of angry shouts, curses and threats rose in the air, as yet a little way distant, but breaking into the stillness of the room with ugly menace.

"The mob!" Whittly whirled on the others, snapping concise orders. "Saul, you've got to get out of sight, quick! John, take that 511 to the garage as fast as you can run, come back here and get your gun. I'll be waiting for you. You two women go to the garage with John, and stay there till I come for you. Run, John! There's no time to waste!"

Cloud leaped out of the door with a curse, running swiftly toward the garage, but none of the others moved.

"Go on, Helene! You're in danger here! You and Mrs. Blauvette get to the garage. Take Saul with you!"

Still no one moved to obey the old doctor's imperative commands. Saul stood watching the two women, clasped in each others' arms. Helene shook her head slowly, but it was Mrs. Blauvette who spoke.

"No. We will stay here—with Saul. We have stood by him too long to change. We are standing by him now."

"Saul—make them go!" Whittly demanded furiously.

"No," Saul denied, his eyes on his mother's face. "And I shall not go. I shall stand by my workshop——"

"Lord, they're here!" Cloud burst into the room, leaped to his trunk against the wall and whipped out a loaded revolver. "They're a bunch of madmen! They'll do something murderous if we don't stop them!"

"Saul, you mad fool, you and the women stay here! It's too late to make the garage now. John and I are going out there armed. You leave that crazy mob to me! They all know me—they may listen to me!" Whittly pulled an ugly-looking weapon from his pocket and motioned to Cloud. "Come on, John! Shoot if you have to!"

The next instant Whittly and Cloud had dashed out the door, darted along the side of the house and come to a halt in front of the laboratory. The first of the mob had already passed to the other side of the great building, among them the men carrying the waste and the inflammable oil. Whittly leaped to the door and snapped on the huge floodlight that illuminated the front of the structure. The glow swept out in a wide arc, bringing into sharp relief the rage-distorted faces of the advancing throng, eyes glaring with insane fury, mouths gaping and screaming curses, threats and wild cries.

They halted a moment involuntarily, surprized by the swift flash of

light, and the sudden appearance of Whittly and Cloud with drawn guns.

"Stop!" Whittly's shout echoed harshly through the instant hush caused by their surprize. "The first one that makes another move, I shoot! And I'll shoot to hit! You're mad! You're a mob of fanatical idiots, come to annoy a man who has been giving his life's blood to save you and all mankind from worse than death!"

"He's been experimenting upon people!" shrieked someone out in the crowd. Another voice took it up, and another, till the cry rose to a maddened roar. "He's been killing human beings for his damnable experiments." "He killed that fellow Arn!" "He killed his mother!" "He said so himself, we heard him!" "This building has got to go!" "The fiend killed his mother!"

"He did not! Listen to me! He saved her life!" Whittly's shout cut through their rage, and their long acquaintance with the doctor, their respect for him and his word, held them in muttering half-quietude to hear him out. "He's found a cure for cancer! Cancer, do you hear me? Corcoran—I see you out there. I see you, Jordan, and you, Masterson. All three of you have cancers—and you know that I know it! Do you want to die, horribly, as Elfield died last week? Or do you want this man to put life into your veins and make you whole?"

A stunned silence held the mob, shaken at the import of what Whittly had said. Then the voice of the man Corcoran answered belligerently: "If he saved his mother from cancer why did he say he killed her?"

"Arn took the solution himself!" Whittly answered, breathing in a little relief, knowing that he had got their attention. "Blauvette refused to give it to him till he was sure of its action. Arn took it himself. Arn appeared to be getting better, and Blauvette's mother was so near death that he gave the solution to her. Then Arn died. Blauvette was nearly crazed, he thought he'd killed his mother. But Arn had taken the wrong solution—and Mrs. Blauvette is alive, made whole again, as you can be made whole. Saul Blauvette has conquered cancer!"

A great shout rose in the crowd.

"If she's healed bring her out." "Bring her out—let us see her!"

Behind the doctor Mrs. Blauvette and Helene stepped into sight, one on each side of Saul. Whittly paled, holding his breath as he caught sight of them. But the thing was done. The mob that had come to destroy, stayed to cheer.

"Blauvette! Blauvette! God save Blauvette! Blauvette has conquered cancer!"

They advanced toward him, shouting his name, cheering and crying in hysterical abandon, swayed to mad fervor of applause by the thing this man had done. And Cloud's cry broke above the sound of their shouts in startled dismay:

"Good God! They've set fire to the laboratory!"

Whittly wheeled to stare where Cloud pointed. On the other side of the huge building flame and smoke sent up their first menacing pillar and glow. The crowd began to back away, stumbling over each other in their wild haste, and Whittly called frantically:

"Henry! Henry Arn's body is in the laboratory!"

"Let him stay!" Saul's answer rose above the increasing crackle of the flames. "He'd rather have it that way! Let him pass with the laboratory that was his love and his life! He would be glad, if he knew! Let him stay!"

In a reverent, silent group, Saul, Cloud, Whittly and the two women stood withdrawn from the heat of the rising, roaring flames, backed by the

awed, hushed crowd. And Saul thought of the night that Henry had spoken of Servetus. He remembered his strange premonition—the scorching heat of fire, the cries of an angry mob, the choking gusts of billowing smoke. The great dream was fulfilled, the battle won. It was fitting that Henry should so go out into eternity, in the great laboratory razed by lurid flames, a mighty funeral pyre.

The next day the news broke. Over the whole world, by the press, by radio and cable flashed a message that staggered the population of the earth. Saul Blauvette had conquered cancer! *Cancer!* That hideous thing that came, none knew whence or how, that ate into the flesh and destroyed life, was now itself to be forever destroyed. Saul Blauvette! The name was on ten million tongues. He had not discovered the origin of the cancer germ. What need now to know? He had discovered the germ itself, he offered to all humanity the powerful serum that ended the life of the microbe and healed the stricken. Cancer! Saul Blauvette.

The world went wild. Men shouted in incredulous wonder. Women wept. Out of the dark chrysalis of their fear men and women came bursting into the light, crying the savior name of Saul Blauvette—Blauvette, who offered salvation to the horror-ridden, refusing to take a cent from them, asking only the privilege of making them whole. In droves they came to surround the office of old Doc Whittly, crowding like sheep. Some came walking with heads held high in hope, some weeping and leaning on others, some carried on stretchers, wan-faced, hardly daring to believe in the saving mercy of the formula 511.

Saul Blauvette, weary, worn, white and radiant, ordered the crew of madly busy assistants, while John Cloud, Whittly, Helene and Mrs. Blauvette moved swiftly among them, carrying bottles and needles filled with 511 and watching the tide of humanity come and go. Dying men and women, released from the grave, threw their hands high in a gesture of gratitude to God and blessed the name of Saul Blauvette. His mother, pausing to glance into his enormous slate-gray eyes, bowed her head in humility before the star in his forehead that shone on all the world.

"Doc!" Saul caught Whittly's arm. "Look at their eyes! They've come into the light! The dark chrysalis is shattered! But I'm still young. Helene and I can't stop here. Tell me what other horror menaces the world. Tell me what to tackle next."

"Next!" Whittly stared at him, and his mother and Helene stood very still just beyond. On his forehead! What a star! Whittly went on slowly: "You've done your work. The world knows you for the greatest of the great."

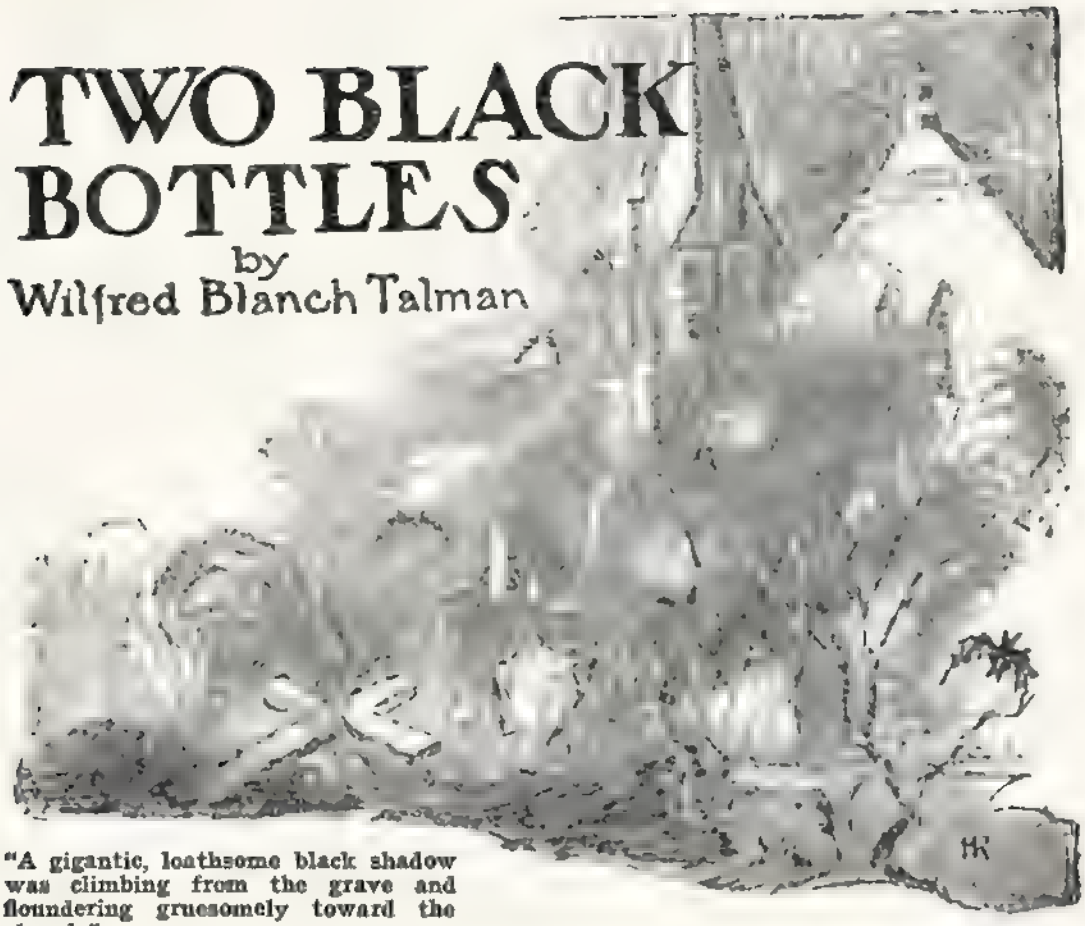
"Every man's greatness must be measured by the quantity of his contribution," Saul answered, his voice deep with exaltation. "It seemed a big thing at first—now it seems so little. I've got to go on giving!"

"To the great all things are small," breathed Mrs. Blauvette, smiling into Helene's shining eyes. "He will go on forever. *You can not stay a star!*"

[THE END]

TWO BLACK BOTTLES

by
Wilfred Blanch Talman



"A gigantic, loathsome black shadow was climbing from the grave and floundering gruesomely toward the church."

NOT all of the few remaining inhabitants of Daalbergen, that dismal little village in the Ramapo Mountains, believe that my uncle, old Dominie Vanderhoof, is really dead. Some of them believe he is suspended somewhere between heaven and hell because of the old sexton's curse. If it had not been for that old magician, he might still be preaching in the little damp church across the moor.

After what has happened to me in Daalbergen, I can almost share the opinion of the villagers. I am not sure that my uncle is dead, but I am very sure that he is not alive upon this earth. There is no doubt that the old sexton buried him once, but he is not in that grave now. I can almost feel him behind me as I write, impelling me to tell the truth about those strange happenings in Daalbergen so many years ago.

It was the fourth day of October when I arrived at Daalbergen in answer to a summons. The letter was from a former member of my uncle's congregation, who wrote that the old man had passed away and that there should be some small estate which I, as his only living relative, might inherit. Having reached the secluded little hamlet by a wearying series of changes on branch railways, I found my way to the grocery store of Mark Haines, writer of the letter, and he, leading me into a stuffy back room,

told me a peculiar tale concerning Dominie Vanderhoof's death.

"Y' should be careful, Hoffman," Haines told me, "when y' meet that old sexton, Abel Foster. He's in league with the devil, sure's you're alive. 'Twa'n't two weeks ago Sam Pryor, when he passed the old graveyard, heared him mumblin' t' the dead there. 'Twa'n't right he should talk that way—an' Sam does vow that there was a voice answered him—a kind o' half-voice, hollow and muffled-like, as though it come out o' th' ground. There's others, too, as could tell y' about seein' him standin' afore old Dominie Slott's grave—that one right agin' the church wall—a-wringin' his hands an' a-talkin' t' th' moss on th' tombstone as though it was the old Dominie himself."

Old Foster, Haines said, had come to Daalbergen about ten years before, and had been immediately engaged by Vanderhoof to take care of the damp stone church at which most of the villagers worshiped. No one but Vanderhoof seemed to like him, for his presence brought a suggestion almost of the uncanny. He would sometimes stand by the door when the people came to church, and the men would coldly return his servile bow while the women brushed past in haste, holding their skirts aside to avoid touching him. He could be seen on week days cutting the grass in the cemetery and tending the flowers around the graves, now and then crooning and muttering to himself. And few failed to notice the particular attention he paid to the grave of the Reverend Guilliam Slott, first pastor of the church in 1701.

It was not long after Foster's establishment as a village fixture that disaster began to lower. First came the failure of the mountain mine where most of the men worked. The vein of iron had given out, and many of the people moved away to better localities, while those who had large holdings of land in the vicinity took to farming and managed to wrest a meager living from the rocky hillsides. Then came the disturbances in the church. It was whispered about that the Reverend Johannes Vanderhoof had made a compact with the devil, and was preaching his word in the house of God. His sermons had become weird and grotesque—redolent with sinister things which the ignorant people of Daalbergen did not understand. He transported them back over ages of fear and superstition to regions of hideous, unseen spirits, and peopled their fancy with night-haunting ghouls. One by one the congregation dwindled, while the elders and deacons vainly pleaded with Vanderhoof to change the subject of his sermons. Though the old man continually promised to comply, he seemed to be enthralled by some higher power which forced him to do its will.

A giant in stature, Johannes Vanderhoof was known to be weak and timid at heart, yet even when threatened with expulsion he continued his eery sermons, until scarcely a handful of people remained to listen to him on Sunday morning. Because of weak finances, it was found impossible to call a new pastor, and before long not one of the villagers dared venture near the church or the parsonage which adjoined it. Everywhere there was fear of those spectral wraiths with whom Vanderhoof was apparently in league.

My uncle, Mark Haines told me, had continued to live in the parsonage because there was no one with sufficient courage to tell him to move out of it. No one ever saw him again, but lights were visible in the parsonage at night, and were even glimpsed in the church from time to time. It was whispered about the

town that Vanderhoof preached regularly in the church every Sunday morning, unaware that his congregation was no longer there to listen. He had only the old sexton, who lived in the basement of the church, to take care of him, and Foster made a weekly visit to what remained of the business section of the village to buy provisions. He no longer bowed servilely to everyone he met, but instead seemed to harbor a demoniac and ill-concealed hatred. He spoke to no one except as was necessary to make his purchases, and glanced from left to right out of evil-filled eyes as he walked the street with his cane tapping the uneven pavements. Bent and shriveled with extreme age, his presence could actually be felt by anyone near him, so powerful was that personality which, said the townspeople, had made Vanderhoof accept the devil as his master. No person in Daalbergen doubted that Abel Foster was at the bottom of all the town's ill luck, but not a one dared lift a finger against him, or could even approach him without a tremor of fear. His name, as well as Vanderhoof's, was never mentioned aloud. Whenever the matter of the church across the moor was discussed, it was in whispers; and if the conversation chanced to be nocturnal, the whisperers would keep glancing over their shoulders to make sure that nothing shapeless or sinister crept out of the darkness to bear witness to their words.

The churchyard continued to be kept just as green and beautiful as when the church was in use, and the flowers near the graves in the cemetery were tended just as carefully as in times gone by. The old sexton could occasionally be seen working there, as if still being paid for his services, and those who dared venture near said that he maintained a continual conversation with the devil and with those spirits which lurked within the graveyard walls.

One morning, Haines went on to say, Foster was seen digging a grave where the steeple of the church throws its shadow in the afternoon, before the sun goes down behind the mountain and puts the entire village in semi-twilight. Later, the church bell, silent for months, tolled solemnly for a half-hour. And at sundown those who were watching from a distance saw Foster bring a coffin from the parsonage on a wheelbarrow, dump it into the grave with slender ceremony, and replace the earth in the hole.

The sexton came to the village the next morning, ahead of his usual weekly schedule, and in much better spirits than was customary. He seemed willing to talk, remarking that Vanderhoof had died the day before, and that he had buried his body beside that of Dominie Slott near the church wall. He smiled from time to time, which was unusual for him, and rubbed his hands in an untimely and unaccountable glee. It was apparent that he took a perverse and diabolic delight in Vanderhoof's death. The villagers were conscious of an added uncanniness in his presence, and avoided him as much as they could. With Vanderhoof gone they felt more insecure than ever, for the old sexton was now free to cast his worst spells over the town from the church across the moor. Muttering something in a tongue which no one understood, Foster made his way back along the road over the swamp.

It was then, it seems, that Mark Haines remembered having heard Dominie Vanderhoof speak of me as his nephew. Haines accordingly sent for me, in the hope that I might know something which would clear up the mystery of my uncle's last years. I assured my summoner, however, that I knew nothing about my

uncle or his past, except that my mother had mentioned him as a man of gigantic physique but with little courage or power of will.

HAVING heard all that Haines had to tell me, I lowered the front legs of my chair to the floor and looked at my watch. It was late afternoon.

"How far is it out to the church?" I inquired. "Think I can make it before sunset?"

"Sure, lad, y' ain't goin' out there t'night! Not t' that place!" The old man trembled noticeably in every limb and half rose from his chair, stretching out a lean, detaining hand. "Why, it's plumb foolishness!" he exclaimed.

I laughed aside his fears and informed him that, come what may, I was determined to see the old sexton that evening and get the whole matter over as soon as possible. I did not intend to accept the superstitions of ignorant country folk as truth, for I was convinced that all I had just heard was merely a chain of events which the over-imaginative people of Daalbergen had happened to link with their ill-luck. I felt no sense of fear or horror whatever.

Seeing that I was determined to reach my uncle's house before nightfall, Haines ushered me out of his office and reluctantly gave me the few required directions, pleading from time to time that I change my mind. He shook my hand when I left, as though he never expected to see me again.

"Take keer that old devil, Foster, don't git ye!" he warned, again and again. "I wouldn't go near him after dark fer love n'r money. No siree!" He re-entered his store, solemnly shaking his head, while I set out along a road leading to the outskirts of the town.

I HAD walked barely two minutes before I sighted the moor of which Haines had spoken. The road, flanked by a whitewashed fence, passed over the great swamp, which was overgrown with clumps of underbrush dipping down into the dank, slimy ooze. An odor of deadness and decay filled the air, and even in the sunlit afternoon little wisps of vapor could be seen rising from the unhealthful spot.

On the opposite side of the moor I turned sharply to the left, as I had been directed, branching from the main road. There were several houses in the vicinity, I noticed; houses which were scarcely more than huts, reflecting the extreme poverty of their owners. The road here passed under the drooping branches of enormous willows which almost completely shut out the rays of the sun. The miasmal odor of the swamp was still in my nostrils, and the air was damp and chilly. I hurried my pace to get out of that dismal tunnel as soon as possible.

Presently I found myself in the light again. The sun, now hanging like a red ball upon the crest of the mountain, was beginning to dip low, and there, some distance ahead of me, bathed in its bloody iridescence, stood the lonely church. I began to sense that uncanniness which Haines had mentioned; that feeling of dread which made all Daalbergen shun the place. The squat, stone hulk of the church itself, with its blunt steeple, seemed like an idol to which the tombstones that surrounded it bowed down and worshiped, each with an arched top like the shoulders of a kneeling person, while over the whole assemblage the dingy, gray parsonage hovered like a wraith.

I had slowed my pace a trifle as I took in the scene. The sun was disappearing behind the mountain very rapidly now, and the damp air

chilled me. Turning my coat collar up about my neck, I plodded on. Something caught my eye as I glanced up again. In the shadow of the church wall was something white —a thing which seemed to have no definite shape. Straining my eyes as I came nearer, I saw that it was a cross of new timber, surmounting a mound of freshly-turned earth. The discovery sent a new chill through me. I realized that this must be my uncle's grave, but something told me that it was not like the other graves near it. It did not seem like a *dead* grave. In some intangible way it appeared to be *living*, if a grave can be said to live. Very close to it, I saw as I came nearer, was another grave; an old mound with a crumbling stone above it. Dominie Slott's tomb, I thought, remembering Haines' story.

There was no sign of life anywhere about the place. In the semi-twilight I climbed the low knoll upon which the parsonage stood, and hammered upon the door. There was no answer. I skirted the house and peered into the windows. The whole place seemed deserted.

The lowering mountains had made night fall with disarming suddenness the minute the sun was fully hidden. I realized that I could see scarcely more than a few feet ahead of me. Feeling my way carefully, I rounded a corner of the house and paused, wondering what to do next.

Everything was quiet. There was not a breath of wind, nor were there even the usual noises made by animals in their nocturnal ramblings. All dread had been forgotten for a time, but in the presence of that sepulchral calm my apprehensions returned. I imagined the air peopled with ghastly spirits that pressed around me, making the air almost unbreathable. I wondered, for the hundredth time, where the old sexton might be.

As I stood there, half expecting some sinister demon to creep from the shadows, I noticed two lighted windows glaring from the belfry of the church. I then remembered what Haines had told me about Foster's living in the basement of the building. Advancing cautiously through the blackness, I found a side door of the church ajar.

The interior had a musty and mildewed odor. Everything which I touched was covered with a cold, clammy moisture. I struck a match and began to explore, to discover, if I could, how to get into the belfry. Suddenly I stopped in my tracks.

A snatch of song, loud and obscene, sung in a voice that was guttural and thick with drink, came from above me. The match burned my fingers, and I dropped it. Two pin-points of light pierced the darkness of the farther wall of the church, and below them, to one side, I could see a door outlined where light filtered through its cracks. The song stopped as abruptly as it had commenced, and there was absolute silence again. My heart was thumping and blood racing through my temples. Had I not been petrified with fear, I should have fled immediately.

Not caring to light another match, I felt my way among the pews until I stood in front of the door. So deep was the feeling of depression which had come over me that I felt as though I were acting in a dream. My actions were almost involuntary.

The door was locked, as I found when I turned the knob. I hammered upon it for some time, but there was no answer. The silence was as complete as before. Feeling around the edge of the door, I found the hinges, removed the pins from them, and allowed the door to fall toward me.

Dim light flooded down a steep flight of steps. There was a sickening odor of whisky. I could now hear someone stirring in the belfry room above. Venturing a low halloo, I thought I heard a groan in reply, and cautiously climbed the stairs.

My first glance into that unhallowed place was indeed startling. Strewn about the little room were old and dusty books and manuscripts—strange things that bespoke almost unbelievable age. On rows of shelves which reached to the ceiling were horrible things in glass jars and bottles—snakes and lizards and bats. Dust and mold and cobwebs encrusted everything. In the center, behind a table upon which was a lighted candle, a nearly empty bottle of whisky, and a glass, was a motionless figure with a thin, scrawny, wrinkled face and wild eyes that stared blankly through me. I recognized Abel Foster, the old sexton, in an instant. He did not move or speak as I came slowly and fearfully toward him.

"Mr. Foster?" I asked, trembling with unaccountable fear when I heard my voice echo within the close confines of the room. There was no reply, and no movement from the figure behind the table. I wondered if he had not drunk himself to insensibility, and went behind the table to shake him.

At the mere touch of my arm upon his shoulder, the strange old man started from his chair as though terrified. His eyes, still having in them that same blank stare, were fixed upon me. Swinging his arms like flails, he backed away.

"Don't!" he screamed. "Don't touch me! Go back—go back!"

I saw that he was both drunk and struck with some kind of a nameless terror. Using a soothing tone, I told him who I was and why I had come. He seemed to understand vaguely and sank back into his chair, sitting limp and motionless.

"I thought ye was him," he mumbled. "I thought ye was him come back fer it. He's been a-tryin' t' get out—a-tryin' t' get out sence I put him in there." His voice again rose to a scream and he clutched his chair. "Maybe he's got out now! Maybe he's out!"

I looked about, half expecting to see some spectral shape coming up the stairs.

"Maybe who's out?" I inquired.

"Vanderhoof!" he shrieked. "Th' cross over his grave keeps fallin' down in th' night! Every morning the earth is loose, and gets harder t' pat down. He'll come out an'. I won't be able t' do nothin'."

Forcing him back into the chair, I seated myself on a box near him. He was trembling in mortal terror, with the saliva dripping from the corners of his mouth. From time to time I felt that sense of horror which Haines had described when he told me of the old sexton. Truly, there was something uncanny about the man. His head had now sunk forward upon his breast, and he seemed calmer, mumbling to himself.

I quietly arose and opened a window to let out the fumes of whisky and the musty odor of dead things. Light from a dim moon, just risen, made objects below barely visible. I could just see Dominie Vanderhoof's grave from my position in the belfry, and blinked my eyes as I gazed at it. That cross *was* tilted! I remembered that it had been vertical an hour ago. Fear took possession of me again. I turned quickly. Foster sat in his chair watching me. His glance was saner than before.

"So ye're Vanderhoof's nephew," he mumbled in a nasal tone. "Waal, ye might's well know it all. He'll be back arter me afore long, he will

—jus' as soon as he can get out o' that there grave. Ye might's well know all about it now."

His terror appeared to have left him. He seemed resigned to some horrible fate which he expected any minute. His head dropped down upon his chest again, and he went on muttering in that nasal monotone.

"Ye see all them there books and papers? Waal, they was once Dominie Slott's—Dominie Slott, who was here years ago. All them things is got t' do with magic—black magic that th' old dominie knew afore he come t' this country. They used t' burn 'em an' boil 'em in oil fer knowin' that over there, they did. But old Slott knew, and he didn't go fer t' tell nobody. No sir, old Slott used to preach here generations ago, an' he used to come up here an' study them books, an' use all them dead things in jars, an' pronounce magic curses an' things, but he didn't let nobody know it. No, nobody knowed it but Dominie Slott an' me."

"You?" I ejaculated, leaning across the table toward him.

"That is, me after I learned it." His face showed lines of trickery as he answered me. "I found all this stuff here when I come t' be church sexton, an' I used t' read it when I wa'n't at work. An' I soon got t' know all about it."

The old man droned on, while I listened, spellbound. He told about learning the difficult formulæ of demonology, so that, by means of incantations, he could cast spells over human beings. He had performed horrible occult rites of his hellish creed, calling down anathema upon the town and its inhabitants. Crazed by his desires, he tried to bring the church under his spell, but the power of God was too strong. Finding Johannes Vanderhoof very weak-willed, he bewitched him so that he preached strange and mystic sermons which struck fear into the simple hearts of the country folk. From his position in the belfry room, he said, behind a painting of the temptation of Christ which adorned the rear wall of the church, he would glare at Vanderhoof while he was preaching, through holes which were the eyes of the Devil in the picture. Terrified by the uncanny things which were happening in their midst, the congregation left one by one, and Foster was able to do what he pleased with the church and with Vanderhoof.

"But what did you do with him?" I asked in a hollow voice as the old sexton paused in his confession. He burst into a cackle of laughter, throwing back his head in drunken glee.

"I took his soul!" he howled in a tone that set me trembling. "I took his soul and put it in a bottle—in a little black bottle! And I buried him! But he ain't got his soul, an' he cain't go neither t' heaven n'r hell! But he's a-comin' back after it. He's a-tryin' t' get out o' his grave now. I can hear him pushin' his way up through the ground, he's that strong!"

As the old man had proceeded with his story, I had become more and more convinced that he must be telling me the truth, and not merely gibbering in drunkenness. Every detail fitted what Haines had told me. Fear was growing upon me by degrees. With the old wizard now shouting with demoniac laughter, I was tempted to bolt down the narrow stairway and leave that accursed neighborhood. To calm myself, I rose and again looked out of the window. My eyes nearly started from their sockets when I saw that the cross above Vanderhoof's grave had fallen perceptibly since I had

last looked at it. It was now tilted to an angle of forty-five degrees!

"Can't we dig up Vanderhoof and restore his soul?" I asked almost breathlessly, feeling that something must be done in a hurry. The old man rose from his chair in terror.

"No, no, no!" he screamed. "He'd kill me! I've fergot th' formula, an' if he gets out he'll be alive, without a soul. He'd kill us both!"

"Where is the bottle that contains his soul?" I asked, advancing threateningly toward him. I felt that some ghastly thing was about to happen, which I must do all in my power to prevent.

"I won't tell ye, ye young whelp!" he snarled. I felt, rather than saw, a queer light in his eyes as he backed into a corner. "An' don't ye touch me, either, or ye'll wish ye hadn't!"

I moved a step forward, noticing that on a low stool behind him there were two black bottles. Foster muttered some peculiar words in a low, singsong voice. Everything began to turn gray before my eyes, and something within me seemed to be dragged upward, trying to get out at my throat. I felt my knees become weak.

Lurching forward, I caught the old sexton by the throat, and with my free arm reached for the bottles on the stool. But the old man fell backward, striking the stool with his foot, and one bottle fell to the floor as I snatched the other. There was a flash of blue flame, and a sulfurous smell filled the room. From the little heap of broken glass a white vapor rose and followed the draft out the window.

"Curse ye, ye rascal!" sounded a voice that seemed faint and far away. Foster, whom I had released when the bottle broke, was crouching against the wall, looking smaller and more shriveled than before. His face was slowly turning greenish-black.

"Curse ye!" said the voice again, hardly sounding as though it came from his lips. "I'm done fer! That one in there was mine! *Dominie Slott took it out two hundred years ago!*"

He slid slowly toward the floor, gazing at me with hatred in eyes that were rapidly dimming. His flesh changed from white to black, and then to yellow. I saw with horror that his body seemed to be crumbling away and his clothing falling into limp folds.

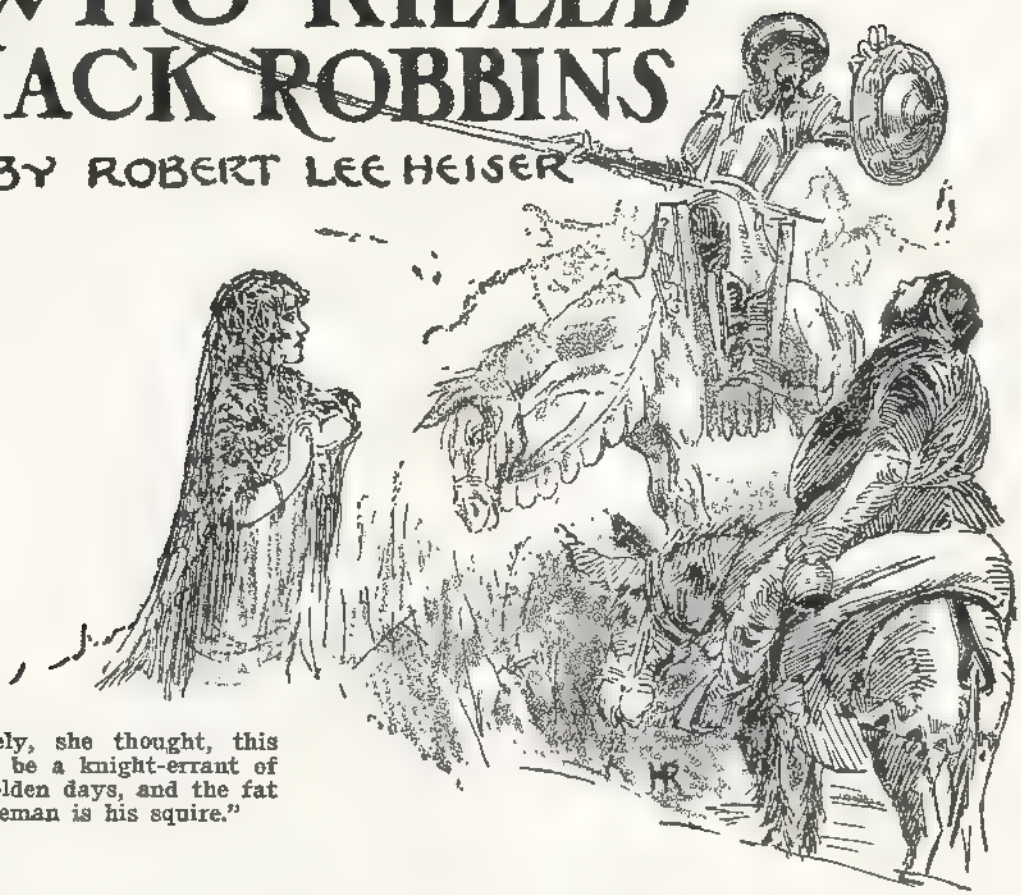
The bottle in my hand was growing warm. I glanced at it, fearfully. It glowed with a faint phosphorescence. Stiff with fright, I set it upon the table, but could not keep my eyes from it. There was an ominous moment of silence as its glow became brighter, and then there came distinctly to my ears the sound of sliding earth. Gasping for breath, I looked out of the window. The moon was now well up in the sky, and by its light I could see that the fresh cross above Vanderhoof's grave had completely fallen. Once again there came the sound of trickling gravel, and no longer able to control myself, I stumbled down the stairs and found my way out of doors. Falling now and then as I raced over the uneven ground, I ran on in abject terror. When I had reached the foot of the knoll, at the entrance to that gloomy tunnel beneath the willows, I heard a horrible roar behind me. Turning, I glanced back toward the church. Its wall reflected the light of the moon, and silhouetted against it was a gigantic, loathsome, black shadow climbing from my uncle's grave and floundering gruesomely toward the church.

I TOLD my story to a group of villagers in Haines' store the next morning. They looked from one to

(Continued on page 287)

WHO KILLED JACK ROBBINS

BY ROBERT LEE HEISER



"Surely, she thought, this must be a knight-errant of the olden days, and the fat gentleman is his squire."

IT IS a supernatural, exciting, aye, an almost unbelievable tale (though I vouch for its truth) that pretty little Kittie Robbins told from her heap of silken cushions amidst the reek of smoldering punk, tinkling of chimes, clang of cymbals, and the soft pattering of slippered feet in Yen Mott Lee's establishment hard by the waterfront.

Because I know (from newspaper accounts) that relatives, officials of a well-known insane asylum, and the police of many cities have been making a world-wide search for Kittie, who disappeared a few days after the death of her husband, I wish to inform them of the girl's whereabouts. I desire, also, to add that I am not at all interested in the reward they have offered. I do feel, though, that what I am about to tell will shed some light on the mystery connected with Jack Robbins' death. It might also enlighten you as to what you can expect to find when you pass beyond the grave.

Neither would I have my readers conclude that I might have been under the influence of drugs or strong drink. I was perfectly sober. I will admit, though—for fear that I might have been seen there—that I stopped in Joe Dugan's place at Shipway and Highland streets, took one drink as a matter of respect for the bartender (I know the bartender; it's beastly stuff he hands out in Dugan's near-beer saloon—nothing at all like the brew he sold before the days of prohibition)

and then went down to Yen Mott Lee's place.

When I entered Yen's establishment I found him burning red-paper prayers at the feet of his ugly tin joss. He gave me no heed. The crowd in the fan-tan room were rolling their wealth away with dice on top of the kettledrums. I did not stop to play, because I had left my last penny with the companionable Joe Dugan. Instead I proceeded back, through the shimmering folds of heavy silk portières, lured by the unearthly music of a stringed instrument.

I found the player. She was a beauty—such a beautiful creature as I would imagine the angels of heaven to be. She was curled up on a heap of silken cushions, and strumming, lazily, at the strings of a mandolin.

"Good evening," she said, looking up drowsily, and without a smile.

That smile should have been there. I do not know why, but I felt like screaming to her that she must smile, even though it were just enough to bring the dimple to her cheek—the dimple that I knew belonged there, once, anyway.

"Good evening," I replied, seating myself on a low teakwood stool, locking my fingers about one knee, and allowing my eyes to feast on this pretty creature—it may be true, as some have said, that she hypnotized me.

"Fan-tan break you?" she asked shortly, nodding her head slowly in the direction from which came the sound of rolling dice and clinking coins on top of the drums.

"No, Miss," I told her, "I am always broke. It is natural. I am a writer of tales. To know this is to know that I have no coins to roll away on top of Yen Mott's drums. I was lured to the waterfront by the desire to see, hear or experience something which would make material for a story—by the way, do you never smile?"

I could not resist the temptation to ask her this. The question had a surprizing result. It was like dropping a match into a can of gasoline. I was not a little startled.

"Smile?" Her drowsiness fell away from her like a cloak. She spat the words out as a snake would dart out its fangs. "Me, smile?" She leaned forward a bit. "What of happiness is my portion that I should smile? Have I not been banished by society as a thing unclean? Am I not an outcast from among my relatives and friends? I came to this"—she waved her bracelet-encircled arm—"because of their pointing fingers, their whisperings behind my back. Me, Kittie Robbins, who knows that 'if a man dies he shall live again.' You ask me to smile when I am approaching insanity—and know it?"

She covered her face with her pretty fingers, threw her head forward in a manner which caused a mass of brown hair to tumble over her face to hide, like a veil, the tears. Her shoulders heaved with deep-throated sobs, and, in compassion, I placed my hand on her head.

"Don't touch me!" she exclaimed, drawing back. "Listen, O writer of tales, I'll tell you who killed Jack Robbins. How the souls of men who have been dead for centuries came to my assistance when my need was great.

"If you have read the newspapers you know that Jack Robbins, my husband, was found sprawled on the floor of his study, his fingers clutching deep in the soft velvet carpet, a knife—his knife—on the floor near by. He was dead. There was nothing to show what caused his death—unless it was the bruised spot on his forehead. Medical men, experts at their trade, said that this injury, in itself, could not have killed him. They pointed out that the spot was barely notice-

able. Just a discoloration of the skin. They found a small ball of iron—a paperweight—on the floor. They (the doctors) agreed that had this weight been thrown with enough force it could have caused the bruise, but never his death. He might have died from disease of the heart? Aye, but the examination proved my husband to have been in perfect health.

"I alone know how he died. They found me in an adjoining room behind locked doors. Friends, relatives and the police listened to my tale—'babblings of a disordered brain' they called it—of how I had killed Jack Robbins with an enchanted bolt. They smiled, shook their heads, and walked away. Because I have read much that has been written about spiritualism, and all that has been written about the knights of old, and believe in both, they—the fools!—insist that I am insane.

"I married Jack less than a year ago. He was cashier in—well, let that go, it is enough to say that his salary was thirty dollars a week. In spite of this small income we lived in a beautiful mansion on the drive amid luxuries which could be commanded only by the wealthy. My clothing was of the most costly materials. New gowns were produced for the asking. Me, a bit of a child who still played with dolls, how was I to know that the money was not gained honestly?

"But within a few months I discovered that others were sharing Jack Robbins' wealth and love. There were other women. I became beastly jealous—aye, so jealous that I came to hate the sight of Jack. Especially when he came home reeling in drunkenness and mouthing curses upon me.

"Then came a night—oh, I shall never, never forget it!—when he brought one of those women—his woman—to the very door with him. Nay, he brought her into his study and introduced her as a friend.

"He threw a bulging handbag on the table. I heard something jangle, inside the bag, like clanking metal. His collar was wilted and his tie hung outside his vest. There was a smear of white plaster on his coat sleeve. He peeled off his topcoat, removed his gloves, and stood for a long while glaring at me through squinted, cruel eyes—they had never seemed so cruel before. The whites were streaked with red. His breath came hot and panting as though he had been running. I do not know why he should have been in such disarray, because I had seen a taxi deliver him at the door—him and his woman.

"The woman (I do not know who she was; I had never seen her before) was painted of face. Her yellow, bobbed hair showed a tendency to return to its natural red through the fading of dyes. There was a worried expression on her face. She seemed extremely nervous and was continually glancing toward the door. Once she went to the window, pulled back the draperies, and looked into the street below.

"'Jack, is this your wife?' she nodded her head in my direction. My eyes grew wide with astonishment as she continued. 'Robbins, you fool, she's not what I expected to find, why, this—this——'

"'Yes,' answered Jack, somewhat angrily, 'I know what you expected to find. One of your kind. One of my kind. Instead, you find that I have grown mushy and have fallen for a doll. I have taken a wife who is a pretty baby without backbone or brains. Not much of a helpmate for a man who is engaged in the dangerous business which I follow. Nevertheless, I want you two to be friends. It is high time that my wife became useful as well as ornamental.'

"Friends? Friends! Me, Kittie Robbins, entertain friendly feelings for this painted-faced she-devil who seemed to know my husband's affairs better than I did! My better judg-

ment, and an entirely peaceful nature, kept telling me to bespeak this woman kindly, gather up my cloak and hat, say good-bye, and walk out of a lot of trouble unmolested. But what is good judgment to a jealous heart? The green-eyed monster of jealousy kept screaming to me, 'Scratch her eyes out!' 'Tear her yellow hair from her head!' 'Use your claws!' and, quite truly, I would have done so had not my husband—who had the strength of two ordinary men—caught me by my hair and thrown me, unceremoniously, upon a couch. All of which only served to enrage me further.

" 'Listen, Kittie, don't be a fool!' I heard him shouting near my ear; 'you will have to act the part of my wife. I need your help. This woman is nothing to me other than a business associate. You have never asked me where I found the money with which to dress and feed you. Do you think that money grows on trees? I am a thief! A burglar! A safe-opener supreme! I am known—the thief, not Jack Robbins—from Scotland Yard to the American Headquarters as a killer! In that bag is the loot of my last haul. We—this woman who is my helper and myself—were hard pressed by the police. It was necessary that we slip in here for cover until the hounds of the law lose the scent. Now, it is up to you as my wife to use your brains, realize that I am your husband, that I am in danger—help me!'

" 'Help you, Jack?' I heard myself saying, as I glared back into his terrible eyes. 'I'd do anything in the world for you, providing it be honest, but I am no thief—nor can I be a thief's wife. I can not even associate with thieves. I shall inform the police immediately. You, in your turn, forget who I am. You will have to act the part of my husband. Do you think that good women grow on companion trees to your money trees?'

"All in all, I believe I answered him rather coolly, under the circumstances. I do not remember that I was—at least not then—frightened. I only know that I was being consumed by the fires of jealousy.

" 'Look you, Jack Robbins,' said the yellow-haired woman through clenched teeth, 'what a terrible mess you have brought us into through marrying this woman. There is no use in beating about the bush. She will inform the police. All they need is a hint as to who you are and the whole gang will dance out of this world on the end of a rope. There is only one way out—kill her! Dead men tell no tales. It is even so with dead ladies. I'll take the gold. Come to me when the job is done.'

"With this, the woman snatched at the bag. I saw the lids of Jack's eyes come more closely together. I saw his white, strong teeth—like a wolf's—unbared. I saw the woman withdraw her hand and back, stumblingly, toward the door.

" 'No you don't, old-timer,' rasped Jack, 'I'll bring the gold when I come.'

"THE woman was gone. Jack Robbins was standing before me, licking his tongue over dry lips, and glaring into my very soul with those dreadful eyes.

" 'Kittie, I have no choice. You know me. I had hoped to bring you to my level, that you would stand by me in my hour of trouble. That is all over. Even though you were to promise to forego your intentions of informing the police, I could not trust you. I must kill you!'

"I saw his hand go to his hip pocket. I saw the glint of light on the naked knife-blade as he moved toward me, rolling up his sleeves—aye, rolling up his sleeves like a butcher!

"I glanced about frantically for something with which to protect my-

self. There was nothing—unless it was the small ball of iron which we used as a paperweight. This bit of iron might have weighed three ounces. A sorry thing to use as a weapon of protection against a big brute of a man like Jack Robbins. But I snatched it up with a scream in my throat and leaped beneath his upraised arm. He was just about to strike—aye, I heard the 'swush!' of the knife arm as I passed under the stroke.

"Before he could right himself and turn to come after me a second time, I had leaped through the doorway to the adjoining room and slammed the door. I hurriedly turned the key in the lock and flung myself on a couch, so terribly frightened that I could not even scream again. My flesh trembled—quivered like jelly. Sweat streamed down from the ends of my eyebrows to mingle with the tears on my cheeks. My heart thumped madly. It would only be a few moments before Jack Robbins would have the door open. I could hear him cursing and threatening.

" 'You may as well open the door and have it over with,' came his voice in a cold, hard tone, 'there is no escape for you. It is either your life or mine. There are no windows in that room. The only means of exit is by this door, and you will find me here when you come out. You can have your choice—starvation or the knife.'

"I did not reply. I had been staring at a candle which flickered in its gilded holder on a table several feet away from the couch upon which I had fallen. I do not know why I should have become so interested in that candle. It seemed to hypnotize me as a snake's eyes fascinate a bird. I was so interested in the candle that I hardly heard Jack Robbins' terrible threats—I remember, though, that I still held the small ball of iron in the hot palm of my hand.

"Suddenly I felt my mind grow weary. I seemed to have a great desire to sleep. This thing—this terrible power of the candle's flickering flame—frightened me worse than Jack Robbins' threats! My very soul—that something within all of us which we can not place our fingers on and say 'that is it' but which we know exists—was leaving my body. I seemed to be floating in space, away from the couch, until I found myself looking directly down upon the candle-flame as though I were hovering above it. Eventually I found myself on the other side of the table, near the floor, and looking back—through the flickering, shimmering, nervous flare of flame—I saw——

"Don't laugh at me! I tell you I saw my own body, itself, crouched among the cushions, there on the couch I had just quitted. Objects in the room began to grow dim. Everything seemed to grow confused. I only knew that I floated, quietly, rapidly away into the great beyond where no human has ever visited and returned to tell the tale—except me, Kittie Robbins, and for that they say I am insane.

"While my body of clay, on the couch, trembled in terror, my soul—the thing which looked back—wanted to laugh, wanted to shout: 'Oh ho, of what would it avail you, Jack Robbins, to kill that body? Break the door in and kill it! You can never kill *me!*' I felt elated. It was a great joke on Jack Robbins.

"Suddenly I discovered that I was not in the room. I looked about to find myself in a field surrounded by a great forest of trees. The sun was shining, birds were singing, and a soft breeze tossed the weeds at my feet.

"I WAS rather at a loss to place myself. Where was I? Who was this approaching from the opposite

side of the field? Could it be Jack Robbins? Surely it was he. His knife was in his right hand. His sleeves were rolled up—like a butcher's—and there was an evil leer on his face.

"'Oh, I'm coming! You can't escape me, you little devil-cat!' he shouted as he approached. 'You thought you did something wonderful when you slipped under my arm that time. I was not expecting that. You will never be able to repeat it—I've driven this knife into more slippery eels than you. I've got you right where I want you this time! You forgot that I, too, might follow you into the great beyond. This thing we call life does not start at birth and end with death. Why should it? Why should everything in creation move in circles—without end—and humanity be the one exception? When you pass out, in what you term death, you simply find yourself reborn into this existence. In the same manner you will pass out of this existence to be reborn into the earth's family——'

"'Help! Help!' I screamed, looking about me wildly.

"'Yell your head off, no one can hear you——'

"For some reason I did not hear what he would have continued to say, for at that moment my attention was attracted by something else. Who was this who was coming out of the forest on the other side? Two men. Certainly they were queer-looking characters. One rode a bony horse. The other rode a mule. It seemed to me that I had met this pair before, but I could not immediately place them. The man on the horse was partly dressed in armor—but, look you, his helmet was nothing more nor less than a barber's brass basin—such a basin as the Spanish barber used in the Sixteenth Century—he dug his heels into his bag-of-bones of a mare furiously, but that good beast simply wagged his ears and carried his master, in answer to my frantic call for help, at an ambling walk. This man was tall, gaunt, deep-set of eyes, and none too cleanly of person.

"The other man—the one who rode the mule—was not near so tall as his companion. He was heavily bearded. His beard would have been none the worse off for a good combing. He looked weary and bedraggled. There was a bandage about his head.

"Surely, I thought, this must be a knight-errant of the olden days, and the bearded gentleman is his squire. My heart was filled with hope. Perhaps this knight would save me from the terrible butcher.

"He was near me now. He was speaking. With a great sweep of his arm and a bowing of his body, which, while none too graceful, was well meant: 'Ah, Madam, you can be none other than the fair Kittie Robbins, heart of my heart, and I would have you to know that he who addresses you is none other than a famous knight of the olden days. You have, no doubt, read of my wonderful exploits on earth—I am continuing my calling here. I mistake not that my further adventures would make good reading—were it not for the fact that biographers and knights-errant go to widely separated places after death, I make no doubt that those further adventures would be recounted.

"'Be that as it may, I have come to rescue you from this perilous situation in which you now find yourself, that you might return to the world to refute the base slander that knights are all fictitious characters, and to inform humanity that there is a life hereafter—how, I ask you, sir,' turning to the man on the mule, 'do you now believe in enchantment?'

"'I' faith, sir,' answered the squire, 'how you can be such an addlepate as to mistake this wench for your lady Kittie Robbins is more than I can understand. Well, be it as you say—a doubter of masters is equal to a quitter. There is no fool like an old fool. Squires are made to obey and not to command their masters. If you say this is your lady Kittie Robbins whom the enchanters have banned to sixty years of life in Yen Mott Lee's establishment in the world from which we progressed during the Sixteenth Century—be it so. Others can say the moon is green but I can think as I choose. Barnum said there was one born every minute and——'

"'Go on, friend, string your proverbs, though they have as little filling as a bladder of wind. What do you know of Barnum? Barnum was of the days immediately prior to automobiles and airships, your day was that of mule and horseback. Would you suggest that I, your master, am a fool?'

"'I' troth, sir, I know not, I only know that you promised to show me heaven after death, and this world is much after the fashion of the one we left—everything, even to fools, seems to be reproduced here——'

"'Ingrate! Hand me that enchanted bolt from your saddle-pack. And you, dear lady, take the bolt, heave it with all your strength against the forehead of the approaching giant. Fie on thee—thou imitation of a squire who has not guts enough to fare forth to do battle with you approaching giant. This is little enough which we can do to protect my lady during her enchantment.'

"'Good sir, I' faith, I see no giant——'

"'Why, my good sir,' I was forced to interrupt. I was somewhat displeased that this squire did not recognize me. 'Why, my good squire, can you not see Jack Robbins approaching with his knife?'

"I found the enchanted bolt in my hand. I do not remember taking it from the knight's hand. It was there—a small bit of iron in the hot palm of my hand. I looked toward Jack Robbins. I was rather surprized and a bit puzzled that my husband had not arrived closer during the lengthy conversation between the knight and his squire. But enchanters have a way of making things seem what they are not. It seemed to me like a long time since I first found myself in the field; nevertheless the man with the knife was still approaching, and a tremor of fear engulfed me.

"'Whine, whine! You——!'

"It was Jack Robbins who spoke.

"'Did you think you could escape me?' he continued.

"I drew back my arm, closed my eyes, and threw the ball of iron as hard as I could. The approaching fiend stopped dead in his tracks, threw his knife away from him, raised to his tiptoes, whirled completely about in a circle, then went crashing on his face to claw among the weeds and—be still.

"I LOOKED about to see what had become of the knight and his squire. I could not see them. Instead I saw the flickering candle-flame. I heard the splintering crash of the door as it was broken by heavy shoulders. I had probably swooned and dreamed all this. I had no time to dwell on the strangeness of it all, for the breaking door told me that Jack Robbins was coming and there was no knight to assist me—even the ball of iron was gone from my hand, as poor a weapon as it was.

"I screamed in terror. I leaped to my feet just as the door fell in, and there—and there stood—not Jack Robbins, as I had expected, but

a big, broad-shouldered man in the blue uniform of a policeman.

"'Come, lady,' he said, in a kindly, although deep-toned voice, 'I feared you had come to harm. My pounding on the door brought no answer from you, and I had to make entrance by force. Who killed Jack Robbins—and how? What has happened here?'

"I did not answer him. I could not find voice to reply. Leaning on his arm I was led out of the room and through the study. As I passed through I saw my husband on the floor. A doctor was bending over him. As I passed close I heard the man of medicines saying, 'Dead, dead as a door-knob, but for the life of me I can't determine what killed him.'

"'I know, I know!' I had found my voice: 'I killed him with an enchanted bolt from beyond the grave.' Then I told my story.

"The doctor looked at me for a moment, his mouth dropped open, he scratched his head, then smiled sadly.

"'Poor soul, she's insane; something terrible has happened here. Here is the enchanted bolt of which she speaks. It weighs less than three ounces. As for the bag of gold, if it ever existed—where is it now? You gentlemen, who knew Jack Robbins, respectable cashier in the Mauginsville Bank, will hardly consider the incident of the yellow-haired woman and the bag of gold. Take her away, we will look after her later.'

"They did look after me. I fooled them. I escaped and came to this place! And now, you writer of tales, you have your story. Go make fun of me—and if you do, and if you come back here to the waterfront in search of yarns, I'll scratch your eyes out!"

As I have said, I only tell what Kittie told. She may have been "stringing" me. She may be crazy. I'm going back some of these times to see if she's still there. I may ask her what became of the bag of gold. I imagine Kittie knows a lot of interesting yarns.

BEETHOVEN

By **ROBERT S. CARR**

A few weird chords of music,
Riding the midnight winds,
Snatched my mind away from me
And out where the dawn begins.
My mind came back with fantasies,
Like cobwebs' gray festoons,
Looped across my consciousness
To sing of gibbous moons;
Of new graves seen by lightning,
And skulls in the seashore's sand;
Of black ghouls' lairs in gloomy woods
Where crumbling tombstones stand;
Of tortured stars that faint and fall
A billion miles through space;
Of moaning ghosts in haunted caves,
And snakes with maidens' face.
When the weird chords ceased, my mind came back,
Like a vampire flapping home
In the dim dawn light from a ghastly night,
No more, I hope, to roam.

WEIRD STORY REPRINT

*The Queen of Spades**

By ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

THERE was a card party at the rooms of Narumoff of the Horse Guards. The long winter night passed away imperceptibly, and it was 5 o'clock in the morning before the company sat down to supper. Those who had won ate with a good appetite, the others sat staring absently at their empty plates. When the champagne appeared, however, the conversation became animated.

"And how did you fare, Surin?" asked the host.

"Oh, I lost, as usual. I must confess that I am unlucky: I play mirandole, I always keep cool, I never allow anything to put me out, and yet I always lose!"

"And you did not once allow yourself to be tempted to back the red? Your firmness astonishes me."

"But what do you think of Hermann?" said one of the guests, pointing to a young engineer. "He has never had a card in his hand in his life, he has never in his life laid a wager, and yet he sits here till 5 in the morning watching our play."

"Play interests me very much," said Hermann, "but I am not in the position to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous."

"Hermann is a German: he is economical—that is all!" observed Tomsky. "But if there is one person that I can not understand, it is my grandmother, the Countess Anna Feodorovna."

"How so?" inquired the guests.

"I can not understand," continued Tomsky, "how it is that my grandmother does not punt."

"What is there remarkable about an old lady of eighty not punting?" asked Narumoff.

"Then you do not know why?"

"No, I haven't the faintest idea."

"Oh, then listen! About sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris, where she created quite a sensation. People used to run after her to catch a glimpse of the 'Muscovite Venus.' Richelieu made love to her, and my grandmother maintains that he almost blew out his brains in consequence of her cruelty. At that time ladies used to play at faro. On one occasion at the court, she lost a large sum to the Duke of Orleans. On returning home, my grandmother removed the patches from her face, took off her hoops, informed my grandfather of her loss at the gaming table, and ordered him to pay the money. My deceased grandfather, as far as I remember, was a sort of house-steward to my grandmother. He dreaded her like fire; but, on hearing of such a heavy loss, he almost went out of his mind; he calculated the various sums she had lost, and pointed out to her that in six months she had spent half a million francs, that neither their Moscow nor Saratoff estates were in Paris, and finally refused point-blank to pay the debt. My grandmother gave him a box on the ear and slept by herself as a sign of her displeasure. The next day she

* Translated from the Russian.

sent for her husband, hoping that this domestic punishment had produced an effect upon him, but she found him inflexible. For the first time in her life, she entered into reasonings and explanations with him, thinking to be able to convince him by pointing out to him that there are debts and debts, and that there is a great difference between a prince and a coachmaker. But it was all in vain: my grandfather remained obdurate.

"But the matter did not rest there. My grandmother did not know what to do. She had shortly before become acquainted with a very remarkable man. You have heard of Count St. Germain, about whom so many marvelous stories are told. You know that he represented himself as the Wandering Jew, as the discoverer of the elixir of life, of the philosopher's stone, and so forth. Some laughed at him as a charlatan; but St. Germain was a very fascinating person, much sought after in the best circles. My grandmother knew that he had large sums of money at his disposal, and she wrote a letter asking him to come to her without delay. The queer old man immediately waited upon her and found her overwhelmed with grief. She described to him in the blackest colors the barbarity of her husband, and ended by declaring that her whole hope depended upon his friendship.

"St. Germain reflected.

"'I could advance you the sum you want,' said he, 'but I know that you would not rest easy until you had paid me back, and I should not like to bring fresh troubles upon you. But there is another way of getting out of your difficulty: you can win back your money.'

"'But, my dear count,' replied my grandmother, 'I tell you that I haven't any money left.'

"'Money is not necessary,' replied St. Germain: 'listen to me.'

"Then he revealed to her a secret, for which each of us would give a good deal."

The young officers listened with increased attention. Tomsky lit his pipe, puffed away for a moment and then continued:

"That same evening my grandmother went to Versailles to the *jeu de la reine*. The Duke of Orleans kept the bank; my grandmother excused herself in an off-hand manner for not having yet paid her debt, by inventing some little story, and then began to play against him. She chose three cards and played them one after the other: all three won *sonika*—that is, in the quickest possible time—and my grandmother recovered every farthing that she had lost."

"Mere chance!" said one of the guests.

"A tale!" observed Hermann.

"Perhaps they were marked cards!" said a third.

"I do not think so," replied Tomsky gravely.

"What!" said Narumoff; "you have a grandmother who knows how to hit upon three lucky cards in succession, and you have not succeeded in getting the secret from her?"

"That's the deuce of it," replied Tomsky: "she had four sons, one of whom was my father; all four were determined gamblers, and yet not to one of them did she ever reveal her secret. But this is what I heard from my uncle, Count Ivan Ilyich, and he assured me, on his honor, that it was true. The late Chaplitzky—the same who died in poverty after having squandered millions—once lost, in his youth, about three hundred thousand rubles. He was in despair. My grandmother, who was always very severe upon the extravagance of young men, took pity, however, upon Chaplitzky. She gave him three cards, telling him to play them one after the other, at the same time exacting from him a solemn promise that he would never play at

cards again as long as he lived. Chaplitzky then went to his victorious opponent, and they began a fresh game. On the first card he staked fifty thousand rubles and won *sonika;* he doubled the stake and won again, till at last, by pursuing the same tactics, he won back more than he had lost.

"But it is time to go to bed: it is a quarter to 6 already."

And indeed it was already beginning to dawn: the young men emptied their glasses and then took leave of each other.

2

The old countess was seated in her dressing room before her looking glass. Three waiting maids stood around her. One held a small pot of rouge, another a box of hair-pins, and the third a tall cap with bright red ribbons. The countess had no longer the slightest pretensions to beauty, but she still preserved the habits of her youth, dressed in strict accordance with the fashion of seventy years before, and made as long and as careful a toilette as she would have done sixty years previously. Near the window, at an embroidery frame, sat a young lady, her ward.

"Good morning, grandmamma," said a young officer, entering the room. "*Bonjour,* Mademoiselle Lisa. Grandmamma, I want to ask you something."

"What is it, Paul?"

"I want you to let me introduce one of my friends to you, and to allow me to bring him to the ball on Friday."

"Bring him directly to the ball and introduce him to me there. Were you at B———'s yesterday?"

"Yes; everything went off very pleasantly, and dancing was kept up until 5 o'clock. How charming Yeletzkaya was!"

"But, my dear, what is there charming about her? Isn't she like her grandmother, the Princess Daria Petrovna? By the way, she must be very old, the Princess Daria Petrovna."

"How do you mean, old?" cried Tomsky thoughtlessly; "she died seven years ago."

The young lady raised her head and made a sign to the young officer. He then remembered that the old countess was never to be informed of the death of any of her contemporaries, and he bit his lips. But she heard the news with indifference.

"Dead!" said she; "and I did not know it. We were appointed maids of honor at the same time, and when we were presented to the Empress. . . ."

And the countess for the hundredth time related to her grandson one of her anecdotes.

"Come, Paul," said she, when she had finished her story, "help me to get up. Lizanka, where is my snuff-box?"

And the countess with her three maids went behind a screen to finish her toilette. Tomsky was left alone with the young lady.

"Who is the gentleman you wish to introduce to the countess?" asked Lizaveta Ivanovna in a whisper.

"Narumoff. Do you know him?"

"No. Is he a soldier or a civilian?"

"A soldier."

"Is he in the Engineers?"

"No, in the Cavalry. What made you think he was in the Engineers?"

The young lady smiled, but made no reply.

"Paul," cried the countess from behind the screen, "send me some new novel, only pray don't let it be one of the present-day style."

"What do you mean, grandmother?"

"That is, a novel in which the hero strangles neither his father nor his mother, and in which there are no drowned bodies. I have a great horror of drowned persons."

"There are no such novels nowadays. Would you like a Russian one?"

"Are there any Russian novels? Pray send me one!"

"Good-bye, grandmother: I am in a hurry. . . . Good-bye, Lizaveta Ivanovna."

And Tomsky left the boudoir.

Lizaveta Ivanovna was left alone: she laid aside her work and began to look out the window. A few minutes afterward, at a corner house on the other side of the street, a young officer appeared. A deep blush covered her cheeks; she took up her work again and bent her head down over the frame. At the same moment the countess returned.

"Order the carriage, Lizaveta," said she; "we will go for a drive."

Lizaveta arose from the frame and began to arrange her work.

"What is the matter with you, my child, are you deaf?" cried the countess. "Order the carriage to be made ready at once."

"I will do so this moment," replied the young lady, hastening into the anteroom.

A servant entered and gave the countess some books from Prince Paul Alexandrovich.

"Tell him that I am much obliged to him," said the countess. "Lizaveta! Where are you running to?"

"I am going to dress."

"There is plenty of time, my dear. sit down here and read to me."

Her companion took the book and read a few lines.

"Louder," said the countess. "What is the matter with you, my child? Have you lost your voice? Wait—give me that footstool—a little nearer—that will do."

Lizaveta read two more pages. The countess yawned.

"Put the book down," said she; "what a lot of nonsense! Send it back to Prince Paul with my thanks. But where is the carriage?"

"The carriage is ready," said Lizaveta, looking out into the street.

"How is it you are not dressed?" asked the countess. "I must always wait for you. It is intolerable."

Liza hastened to her room. She had not been there two minutes, before the countess began to ring with all her might. The three waiting maids came running in at one door and the valet at another.

"How is it that you can not hear me when I ring for you?" said the countess. "Tell Lizaveta Ivanovna I am waiting for her."

Lizaveta returned with her hat and cloak on.

"At last you are here!" said the countess. "But why such an elaborate toilette? Whom do you intend to captivate? What sort of weather is it? It seems rather windy."

"No, your Ladyship, it is very calm," replied the valet.

"You never think of what you are talking about. Open the window. So it is: windy and bitterly cold. Unharness the horses. Lizaveta, we won't go out—there was no need for you to deck yourself like that."

"What a life is mine!" thought Lizaveta Ivanovna.

And, in truth, Lizaveta Ivanovna was a very unfortunate creature. The old countess had by no means a bad heart, but she was capricious, like a woman who had been spoilt by the world, as well as being avaricious and egotistical, like all old people who have seen their best days, and whose thoughts are with the past and not the present. She participated in all the vanities of the great world, went to balls, where she sat in a corner, painted and dressed in old-fashioned style, like a deformed but indispensable ornament of the ballroom; all the guests on entering approached her and made a profound bow, as if in accordance with a set ceremony, but after that nobody took further notice of her.

Her numerous domestics, growing fat and old in her antechamber and servants' hall, did just as they liked, and vied with each other in robbing the aged countess in the most barefaced manner. Lizaveta Ivanovna was the martyr of the household. She made tea, and was reproached with using too much sugar; she read novels aloud to the countess, and the faults of the author were visited upon her head; she accompanied the countess in her walks, and was held answerable for the weather or the state of the pavement. A salary was attached to the post, but she very rarely received it, although she was expected to dress like everybody else, that is to say, like very few indeed. In society she played the most pitiable rôle. Everybody knew her, and nobody paid her any attention. At balls she danced only when a partner was wanted, the ladies would only take hold of her arm when it was necessary to lead her out of the room to attend to their dresses. She was very self-conscious, and felt her position keenly, and she looked about her with impatience for a deliverer to come to her rescue; but the young men, calculating in their giddiness, honored her with but very little attention, although Lizaveta Ivanovna was a hundred times prettier than the bare-faced and cold-hearted marriageable girls around whom they hovered. Many a time did she quietly slink away from the glittering but wearisome drawing room, to go and cry in her own poor little room, in which stood a screen, a chest of drawers, a looking-glass and a painted bedstead, and where a tallow candle burnt feebly in a copper candlestick.

One morning—this was about two days after the evening party described at the beginning of this story, and a week previous to the scene at which we have just assisted—Lizaveta Ivanovna was seated near the window at her embroidery frame, when, happening to look out into the street, she caught sight of a young engineer officer, standing motionless with his eyes fixed upon her window. She lowered her head and went on again with her work. About five minutes afterward she looked out again—the young officer was still standing in the same place. Not being in the habit of coquetting with passing officers, she did not continue to gaze out into the street, but went on sewing for a couple of hours, without raising her head. Dinner was announced. She rose up and began to put her embroidery away, but glancing casually out of the window, she perceived the officer again. This seemed to her very strange. After dinner she went to the window with a certain feeling of uneasiness, but the officer was no longer there—and she thought no more about him.

A couple of days afterward, just as she was stepping into the carriage with the countess, she saw him again. He was standing close behind the door, with his face half-concealed by his fur collar, but his dark eyes sparkled beneath his cap. Lizaveta felt alarmed, and she trembled as she seated herself in the carriage.

On returning home, she hastened to the window—the officer was standing in his accustomed place, with his eyes fixed upon her. She drew back, a prey to curiosity and agitated by a feeling that was quite new to her.

From that time forward not a day passed without the young officer making his appearance under the window at the customary hour, and between him and her there was established a sort of mute acquaintance. Sitting in her place at work, she used to feel his approach; and raising her head, she would look at him longer and longer each day. The young man seemed to be very grateful to her: a sudden flush covered his pale cheeks

each time their glances met. After about a week she commenced to smile at him.

When Tomsky asked permission of his grandmother the countess to present one of his friends to her, the young girl's heart beat violently. But hearing that Narumoff was not an engineer, she regretted that by her thoughtless question she had betrayed her secret to the volatile Tomsky.

Hermann was the son of a German who had become a naturalized Russian, and from whom he had inherited a small capital. Being firmly convinced of the necessity of preserving his independence, Hermann did not touch his private income, but lived on his pay, without allowing himself the slightest luxury. And though he was a gamester at heart, he never touched a card, for he considered his position did not allow him, as he said, "to risk the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous," yet he would sit for nights together at the card table and follow the game with feverish anxiety.

The story of the three cards had produced a powerful impression upon his imagination, and all night long he could think of nothing else. "If," he thought to himself the following evening, as he walked along the streets of St. Petersburg, "if the old countess would but reveal her secret to me! If she would only tell me the names of the three winning cards! Why should I not try my fortune? I must get introduced to her and win her favor—become her lover. But all that will take time, and she is eighty-seven years old: she might be dead in a week, in a couple of days even. But the story itself: can it really be true? No! Economy, temperance and industry: those are my three winning cards; by means of them I shall be able to double my capital—increase it sevenfold, and procure for myself ease and independence."

Musing in this manner, he walked on until he found himself in one of the principal streets of St. Petersburg, in front of a house of antiquated architecture. The street was blocked with equipages; carriages one after the other drew up in front of the brilliantly illuminated doorway. At one moment there stepped out on to the pavement the well-shaped little foot of some young beauty, at another the heavy boot of a cavalry officer, and then the silk stockings and shoes of a member of the diplomatic world. Furs and cloaks passed in rapid succession before the gigantic porter at the entrance.

Hermann stopped. "Whose house is this?" he asked of the watchman at the corner.

"The Countess Anna Feodorovna's" replied the watchman.

Hermann started. The strange story of the three cards again presented itself to his imagination. He began walking up and down before the house, thinking of its owner and her strange secret. Returning late to his modest lodging, he could not go to sleep for a long time, and when at last he did doze off, he could dream of nothing but cards, green tables, piles of bank-notes and heaps of ducats. He played one card after the other, winning uninterruptedly, and then he gathered up the gold and filled his pockets with the notes. When he woke up late the next morning, he sighed over the loss of his imaginary wealth, and then sallying out into the town, he found himself once more in front of the countess' residence. He looked up at the windows. At one of these he saw a head with luxuriant black hair, which was bent down probably over some book or an embroidery frame. The head was raised. Hermann saw a fresh complexion and a pair of dark eyes. That moment decided his fate.

3

LIZAVETA IVANOVNA had scarcely taken off her hat and cloak before the countess sent for her and again told her to get the carriage ready. The vehicle drew up before the door, and they prepared to take their seats. Just at the moment when two footmen were assisting the old lady to enter the carriage, Lizaveta saw her engineer standing close beside the wheel; he grasped her hand; alarm caused her to lose her presence of mind, and the young man disappeared—but not before he had left a letter between her fingers. She concealed it in her glove, and during the whole of the drive she neither saw nor heard anything.

It was the custom of the countess to be constantly asking such questions as: "Who was that person that met us just now? What is the name of this bridge? What is written on that signboard?" On this occasion, however, Lizaveta returned such vague and absurd answers that the countess became angry with her.

"What is the matter with you, my dear?" she exclaimed. "Have you taken leave of your senses, or what is it? Do you not hear me or understand what I say? Heaven be thanked, I am still in my right mind and speak plainly enough!"

Lizaveta Ivanovna did not hear her. On returning home she ran to her room and drew the letter out of her glove. It contained a declaration of love; it was tender, respectful, and copied word for word from a German novel. But Lizaveta did not know anything of the German language, and she was quite delighted.

For all that, the letter caused her to feel exceedingly uneasy. For the first time in her life she was entering into secret and confidential relations with a young man. His boldness alarmed her. She reproached herself for her imprudent behavior, and knew not what to do. Should she cease to sit at the window and, by assuming an appearance of indifference toward him, put a check upon the young officer's desire for further acquaintance with her? Should she send his letter back to him, or should she answer him in a cold and decided manner? At length she resolved to reply to him.

She sat down at her little writing table, took pen and paper, and began to think. Several times she began the letter and then tore it up, for the way she had expressed herself seemed either too inviting or too coldly decisive. At last she succeeded in writing a few lines with which she felt satisfied.

"I am convinced," she wrote, "that your intentions are honorable, and that you do not wish to offend me by any imprudent behavior, but our acquaintance must not begin in such a manner. I return your letter, and I hope that I shall never have any cause to complain of this undeserved slight."

The next day, as soon as Hermann made his appearance, Lizaveta rose from her embroidery, went into the drawing room, opened the ventilator and threw the letter into the street, trusting that the young officer would have the perception to pick it up.

Hermann hastened forward, picked it up and then repaired to a confectioner's shop. Breaking the seal of the envelope, he found inside it his own letter and Lizaveta's reply. He had expected this, and he returned home, his mind deeply occupied.

Three days afterward, a bright-eyed young girl from a milliner's establishment brought Lizaveta a letter. Lizaveta opened it with great uneasiness, fearing that it was a demand for money, when suddenly she recognized Hermann's handwriting.

"You have made a mistake," she said: "this letter is not for me."

"Oh, yes, it is for you," replied the girl, smiling very knowingly. "Have the goodness to read it."

Lizaveta glanced at the letter. Hermann requested an interview.

"It can not be," she cried, alarmed at the audacious request, and the manner in which it was made. "This letter is certainly not for me."

And she tore it into fragments.

"If the letter was not for you, why have you torn it up?" said the girl. "I should have given it back to the person who sent it."

"Be good enough, my dear," said Lizaveta, disconcerted by this remark, "not to bring me any more letters, and tell the person who sent you that he ought to be ashamed."

But Hermann was not the man to be thus put off. Every day Lizaveta received from him a letter, sent now in this way, now in that. They were no longer translated from the German. Hermann wrote them under the inspiration of passion, and spoke in his own language, and they bore full testimony to the inflexibility of his desire and the disordered condition of his uncontrollable imagination. Lizaveta no longer thought of sending them back to him: she became intoxicated with them and began to reply to them, and little by little her answers became longer and more affectionate.

At last she threw out of the window to him the following letter: "This evening there is going to be a ball at the embassy. The countess will be there. We shall remain until 2 o'clock. You have now an opportunity of seeing me alone. As soon as the countess is gone, the servants will very probably go out, and there will be nobody left but the Swiss, and he usually goes to sleep in his lodge. Come about half-past 11. Walk straight upstairs. If you meet anybody in the anteroom, ask if the countess is at home. You will be told 'No,' in which case there will be nothing left for you to do but to go away again. But it is most probable that you will meet nobody. The maidservants will all be together in one room. On leaving the anteroom, turn to the left, and walk straight on until you reach the countess' bedroom. In the bedroom, behind a screen, you will find two doors: the one on the right leads to a cabinet, which the countess never enters; the one on the left leads to a corridor, at the end of which is a little winding staircase; this leads to my room."

HERMANN trembled like a tiger, as he waited for the appointed time to arrive. At 10 o'clock in the evening he was already in front of the countess' house. The weather was terrible; the wind blew with great violence; the sleety snow fell in large flakes; the lamps emitted a feeble light, the streets were deserted; from time to time a sledge, drawn by a sorry-looking hack, passed by, on the lookout for a belated passenger. Hermann was enveloped in a thick overcoat, and felt neither wind nor snow.

At last the countess' carriage drew up. Hermann saw two footmen carry out in their arms the bent form of the old lady, wrapped in sable fur, and immediately behind her, clad in a warm mantle, and with her head ornamented with a wreath of fresh flowers, followed Lizaveta. The door was closed. The carriage rolled away heavily through the yielding snow. The porter shut the street door; the windows became dark.

Hermann began walking up and down near the deserted house; at length he stopped under a lamp and glanced at his watch: it was twenty minutes past 11.

At half-past 11 precisely, he ascended the steps of the house, and made his way into the brightly illuminated vestibule. He hastily ascended the staircase, opened the door of the anteroom and saw a footman sitting

asleep in an antique chair by the side of a lamp. With a light, firm step Hermann passed by him. The drawing room and dining room were in darkness, but a feeble reflection penetrated thither from the lamp in the anteroom.

Hermann reached the countess' bedroom. Before a shrine, which was full of old images, a golden lamp was burning. Faded stuffed chairs and divans with soft cushions stood in melancholy symmetry around the room, the walls of which were hung with China silk. On one side of the room hung two portraits painted in Paris by Madame Lebrun. In the corners stood porcelain shepherds and sheperdesses, dining room clocks, bandboxes, roulettes, fans and the various playthings for the amusement of ladies that were in vogue at the end of the last century, when Montgolfier's balloons and Mesmer's magnetism were the rage. Hermann stepped behind the screen. At the back of it stood a little iron bedstead; on the right was the door which led to the cabinet; on the left, the other which led to the corridor. He opened the latter, and saw the little winding staircase which led to the room of the poor companion. But he retraced his steps and entered the dark cabinet.

The time passed slowly. All was still. The clock in the drawing room struck 12; the strokes echoed through the room one after the other, and everything was quiet again. Hermann stood leaning against the cold stove. He was calm; his heart beat regularly, like that of a man resolved upon a dangerous but inevitable undertaking. One o'clock in the morning struck; then 2; and he heard the distant noise of carriage-wheels. An involuntary agitation took possession of him. The carriage drew near and stopped. He heard the sound of the carriage-steps being let down. All was bustle within the house. The servants were running hither and thither, there was a confusion of voices, and the rooms were lit up. Three antiquated chambermaids entered the bedroom, and they were shortly afterward followed by the countess, who, more dead than alive, sank into a Voltaire armchair. Hermann peeped through a chink. Lizaveta Ivanovna passed close by him, and he heard her hurried steps as she hastened up the little spiral staircase. For a moment his heart was assailed by something like a pricking of conscience, but the emotion was only transitory, and his heart became petrified as before.

The countess began to undress before her looking-glass. Her rose-bedecked cap was taken off, and then her powdered wig was removed from off her white and closely-cut hair. Hairpins fell in showers around her. Her yellow satin dress, brocaded with silver, fell down at her swollen feet.

Hermann was a witness of the repugnant mysteries of her toilette; at last the countess was in her night-cap and dressing gown, and in this costume, more suitable to her age, she appeared less hideous and deformed.

Like most old people, the countess suffered from sleeplessness. Having undressed, she seated herself at the window in a Voltaire armchair and dismissed her maids. The candles were taken away, and once more the room was left with only one lamp burning in it. The countess sat there looking quite yellow, mumbling with her flaccid lips and swaying to and fro. Her dull eyes expressed complete vacancy of mind, and, looking at her, one would have thought that the rocking of her body was not a voluntary action of her own, but was produced by the action of some concealed galvanic mechanism.

Suddenly the deathlike face assumed an inexplicable expression. The lips ceased to tremble, the eyes

became animated: before the countess stood an unknown man.

"Do not be alarmed, for heaven's sake, do not be alarmed!" said he in a low but distinct voice. "I have no intention of doing you any harm, I have only come to ask a favor of you."

The old woman looked at him in silence, as if she had not heard what he had said. Hermann thought that she was deaf, and, bending down toward her ear, he repeated what he had said. The aged countess remained silent as before.

"You can insure the happiness of my life," continued Hermann, "and it will cost you nothing. I know that you can name three cards in order——"

Hermann stopped. The countess appeared now to understand what he wanted; she seemed as if seeking for words to reply.

"It was a joke," she replied at last. "I assure you it was only a joke."

"There is no joking about the matter," replied Hermann angrily. "Remember Chaplitzky, whom you helped to win."

The countess became visibly uneasy. Her features expressed strong emotion, but they quickly resumed their former immobility.

"Can you not name me these three winning cards?" continued Hermann.

The countess remained silent; Hermann continued: "For whom are you preserving your secret? For your grandsons? They are rich enough without it; they do not know the worth of money. Your cards would be of no use to a spendthrift. He who can not preserve his paternal inheritance will die in want, even though he had a demon at his service. I am not a man of that sort; I know the value of money. Your three cards will not be thrown away upon me. Come!"

He paused and tremblingly awaited her reply. The countess remained silent; Hermann fell upon his knees.

"If your heart has ever known the feeling of love," said he, "if you remember its rapture, if you have ever smiled at the cry of your new-born child, if any human feeling has ever entered into your breast, I entreat you by the feelings of a wife, a lover, a mother, by all that is most sacred in life, not to reject my prayer. Reveal to me your secret. Of what use is it to you? Maybe it is connected with some terrible sin, with the loss of eternal salvation, with some bargain with the devil. Reflect: you are old; you have not long to live; I am ready to take your sins upon my soul. Only reveal to me your secret. Remember that the happiness of a man is in your hands, that not only I, but my children, and grandchildren, will bless your memory and reverence you as a saint."

The old countess answered not a word.

Hermann rose to his feet.

"You old hag," he exclaimed, grinding his teeth, "then I will make you answer!"

With these words he drew a pistol from his pocket.

At the sight of the pistol, the countess for the second time exhibited strong emotion. She shook her head and raised her hands as if to protect herself from the shot; then she fell backward and remained motionless.

"Come, an end to this childish nonsense!" said Hermann, taking hold of her hand. "I ask you for the last time: will you tell me the names of your three cards, or will you not?"

The countess made no reply. Hermann perceived that she was dead!

4

LIZAVETA IVANOVNA was sitting in her room, still in her ball dress, lost in deep thought. On returning home, she had hastily dismissed the

chambermaid, who very reluctantly came forward to assist her, saying that she would undress herself, and with a trembling heart had gone up to her own room, expecting to find Hermann there, but yet hoping not to find him. At the first glance she convinced herself that he was not there, and she thanked her fate for having prevented him keeping the appointment. She sat down without undressing, and began to recall to mind all the circumstances which in so short a time had carried her so far. It was not three weeks since the time when she first saw the young officer from the window, and yet she was already in correspondence with him, and he had succeeded in inducing her to grant him a nocturnal interview! She knew his name only through his having written it at the bottom of some of his letters; she had never spoken to him, had never heard his voice, and had never heard him spoken of until that evening. But, strange to say, that very evening at the ball, Tomsky, being piqued with the young Princess Pauline N———, who, contrary to her usual custom, did not flirt with him, wished to revenge himself by assuming an air of indifference: he therefore engaged Lizaveta Ivanovna and danced an endless mazurka with her. During the whole of the time he kept teasing her about her partiality for engineer officers; he assured her that he knew far more than she imagined, and some of his jests were so happily aimed, that Lizaveta thought several times that her secret was known to him.

"From whom have you learnt all this?" she asked, smiling.

"From a friend of a person very well known to you," replied Tomsky; "from a very distinguished man."

"And who is this distinguished man?"

"His name is Hermann."

Lizaveta made no reply; but her hands and feet lost all sense of feeling.

"This Hermann," continued Tomsky, "is a man of romantic personality. He has the profile of a Napoleon, and the soul of a Mephistopheles. I believe that he has at least three crimes upon his conscience. . . . How pale you have become!"

"I have a headache. But what did this Hermann—or whatever his name is—tell you?"

"Hermann is very much dissatisfied with his friend: he says that in his place he would act very differently. I even think that Hermann himself has designs upon you; at least, he listens very attentively to all that his friend has to say about you."

"And where has he seen me?"

"In church, perhaps; or on the parade—God alone knows where. It may have been in your room, while you were asleep, for there is nothing that he——"

Three ladies approaching him interrupted the conversation, which had become so tantalizingly interesting to Lizaveta.

The lady chosen by Tomsky was the Princess Pauline herself. She succeeded in effecting a reconciliation with him during the numerous turns of the dance, after which he conducted her to her chair. On returning to his place, Tomsky thought no more either of Hermann or Lizaveta. She longed to renew the interrupted conversation, but the mazurka came to an end, and shortly afterward the old countess took her departure.

Tomsky's words were nothing more than the customary small talk of the dance, but they sank deep into the soul of the young dreamer. The portrait, sketched by Tomsky, coincided with the picture she had formed within her own mind, and thanks to the latest romances, the ordinary countenance of her admirer became invested with attributes capable of alarming her and fascinating her

imagination at the same time. She was now sitting with her bare arms crossed and with her head, still adorned with flowers, sunk upon her uncovered bosom. Suddenly the door opened and Hermann entered. She shuddered.

"Where were you?" she asked in a terrified whisper.

"In the old countess' bedroom," replied Hermann: "I have just left her. The countess is dead."

"My God! What do you say?"

"And I am afraid," added Hermann, "that I am the cause of her death."

Lizaveta looked at him, and Tomsky's words found an echo in her soul: "This man has at least three crimes upon his conscience!" Hermann sat down by the window and related all that had happened.

Lizaveta listened to him in terror. So all those passionate letters, those ardent desires, this bold obstinate pursuit—all this was not love! Money—that was what his soul yearned for! She could not satisfy his desire and make him happy! The poor girl had been nothing but the blind tool of a robber, of the murderer of her aged benefactress! She wept bitter tears of agonized repentance. Hermann gazed at her in silence: his heart, too, was a prey to violent emotion, but neither the tears of the poor girl, nor the wonderful charm of her beauty, enhanced by her grief, could produce any impression upon his hardened soul. He felt no pricking of conscience at the thought of the dead old woman. One thing only grieved him: the irreparable loss of the secret from which he had expected to obtain great wealth.

"You are a monster!" said Lizaveta at last.

"I did not wish for her death," replied Hermann. "My pistol was not loaded."

Both remained silent.

The day began to dawn. Lizaveta extinguished her candle: a pale light illumined her room. She wiped her tear-stained eyes and raised them toward Hermann: he was sitting near the window, with his arms crossed and with a fierce frown upon his forehead. In this attitude he bore a striking resemblance to the portrait of Napoleon. This resemblance struck Lizaveta even.

"How shall I get you out of the house?" said she at last. "I thought of conducting you down the secret staircase, but in that case it would be necessary to go through the countess' bedroom, and I am afraid."

"Tell me how to find this secret staircase—I will go alone."

Lizaveta arose, took from her drawer a key, handed it to Hermann and gave him the necessary instructions. Hermann pressed her cold, limp hand, kissed her bowed head, and left the room.

He descended the winding staircase, and once more entered the countess' bedroom. The dead old lady sat as if petrified; her face expressed profound tranquillity. Hermann stopped before her, and gazed long and earnestly at her, as if he wished to convince himself of the terrible reality; at last he entered the cabinet, felt behind the tapestry for the door, and then began to descend the dark staircase, filled with strange emotions. "Down this very staircase," thought he, "perhaps coming from the very same room, and at this very same hour sixty years ago, there may have glided, in an embroidered coat, with his hair dressed *à l'oiseau royal* and pressing to his heart his three-cornered hat, some young gallant, who has long been moldering in the grave, but the heart of his aged mistress has only today ceased to beat."

At the bottom of the staircase Hermann found a door, which he opened with the key, and then traversed a

corridor which conducted him into the street.

5

THREE days after the fatal night, at 9 o'clock in the morning, Hermann repaired to the Convent of ———, where the last honors were to be paid to the mortal remains of the old countess. Although feeling no remorse, he could not altogether stifle the voice of conscience, which said to him: "You are the murderer of the old woman!" In spite of his entertaining very little religious belief, he was exceedingly superstitious; and believing that the dead countess might exercise an evil influence on his life, he resolved to be present at her obsequies in order to implore her pardon.

The church was full. It was with difficulty that Hermann made his way through the crowd of people. The coffin was placed upon a rich catafalque beneath a velvet baldachin. The deceased countess lay within it, with her hands crossed upon her breast, with a lace cap upon her head and dressed in a white satin robe. Around the catafalque stood the members of her household: the servants in black caftans, with armorial ribbons upon their shoulders, and candles in their hands; the relatives —children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren—in deep mourning.

Nobody wept; tears would have been an affectation. The countess was so old that her death could have surprized nobody, and her relatives had long looked upon her as being out of the world. A famous preacher pronounced the funeral sermon. In simple and touching words he described the peaceful passing away of the righteous, who had passed long years in calm preparation for a Christian end. "The angel of death found her," said the orator, "engaged in pious meditation and waiting for the midnight bridegroom."

The service concluded amidst profound silence. The relatives went forward first to take farewell of the corpse. Then followed the numerous guests, who had come to render the last homage to her who for so many years had been a participator in their frivolous amusements. After these followed the members of the countess' household. The last of these was an old woman of the same age as the deceased. Two young women led her forward by the hand. She had not strength enough to bow down to the ground—she merely shed a few tears and kissed the cold hand of her mistress.

Hermann now resolved to approach the coffin. He knelt down upon the cold stones and remained in that position for some minutes; at last he arose, as pale as the deceased countess herself; he ascended the steps of the catafalque and bent over the corpse. . . . At that moment it seemed to him that the dead woman darted a mocking look at him and winked with one eye. Hermann started back, took a false step and fell to the ground. Several persons hurried forward and raised him up. At the same moment Lizaveta Ivanovna was borne fainting into the porch of the church. This episode disturbed for some minutes the solemnity of the gloomy ceremony. Among the congregation arose a deep murmur, and a tall, thin chamberlain, a near relative of the deceased, whispered in the ear of an Englishman who was standing near him, that the young officer was a natural son of the countess, to which the Englishman replied: "Oh!"

During the whole of that day, Hermann was strangely excited. Repairing to an out-of-the-way restaurant to dine, he drank a great deal of wine, contrary to his usual custom, in the hope of deadening his inward agitation. But the wine only served to excite his imagination still more. On returning home, he threw himself

upon his bed without undressing, and fell into a deep sleep.

When he awoke, it was already night, and the moon was shining into the room. He looked at his watch: it was a quarter to 3. Sleep had left him; he sat down upon his bed and thought of the funeral of the old countess.

At that moment somebody in the street looked in at his window, and immediately passed on again. Hermann paid no attention to this incident. A few minutes afterward he heard the door of his anteroom open. Hermann thought that it was his orderly, drunk as usual, returning from some nocturnal expedition, but presently he heard footsteps that were unknown to him: somebody was walking softly over the floor in slippers. The door opened, and a woman dressed in white entered the room. Hermann mistook her for his old nurse, and wondered what could bring her there at that hour of the night. But the white woman glided rapidly across the room and stood before him—and Hermann recognized the countess!

"I have come to you against my wish," she said in a firm voice: "but I have been ordered to grant your request. Three, seven, ace, will win for you if played in succession, but only on these conditions: that you do not play more than one card in twenty-four hours, and that you never play again during the rest of your life. I forgive you my death, on condition that you marry my companion, Lizaveta Ivanovna."

With these words she turned round very quietly, walked with a shuffling gait toward the door and disappeared. Hermann heard the street door open and shut, and again he saw someone look in at him through the window.

For a long time Hermann could not recover himself. He then rose up and entered the next room. His orderly was lying asleep upon the floor, and he had much difficulty in waking him. The orderly was drunk as usual, and no information could be obtained from him. The street door was locked. Hermann returned to his room, lit his candle, and wrote down all the details of his vision.

6

Two fixed ideas can no more exist together in the moral world than two bodies can occupy one and the same place in the physical world. "Three, seven, ace" soon drove out of Hermann's mind the thought of the dead countess. "Three, seven, ace" were perpetually running through his head and continually being repeated by his lips. If he saw a young girl, he would say: "How slender she is! quite like the three of hearts." If anybody asked: "What is the time?" he would reply: "Five minutes to 7." Every stout man that he saw reminded him of the ace. "Three, seven, ace" haunted him in his sleep, and assumed all possible shapes. The threes bloomed before him in the forms of magnificent flowers, the sevens were represented by Gothic portals, and the aces became transformed into gigantic spiders. One thought alone occupied his whole mind—to make a profitable use of the secret which he had purchased so dearly. He thought of applying for a furlough so as to travel abroad. He wanted to go to Paris and tempt fortune in some of the public gambling houses that abounded there. Chance spared him all this trouble.

There was in Moscow a society of rich gamesters, presided over by the celebrated Chekalinsky, who had passed all his life at the card-table and had amassed millions, accepting bills of exchange for his winnings and paying his losses in ready money. His long experience obtained for him the confidence of his companions, and his open house, his famous cook, and

his agreeable and fascinating manners gained for him the respect of the public. He came to St. Petersburg. The young men of the capital flocked to his rooms, forgetting balls for cards, and preferring the emotions of faro to the seductions of flirting. Narumoff conducted Hermann to Chekalinsky's residence.

They passed through a suite of magnificent rooms, filled with attentive domestics. The place was crowded. Generals and privy councilors were playing at whist; young men were lolling carelessly upon the velvet-covered sofas, eating ices and smoking pipes. In the drawing room, at the head of a long table, around which were assembled about a score of players, sat the master of the house keeping the bank. He was a man of about sixty years of age, of very dignified appearance; his head was covered with silvery-white hair; his full, florid countenance expressed good-nature, and his eyes twinkled with a perpetual smile. Narumoff introduced Hermann to him. Chekalinsky shook him by the hand in a friendly manner, requested him not to stand on ceremony, and then went on dealing.

The game occupied some time. On the table lay more than thirty cards. Chekalinsky paused after each throw, in order to give the players time to arrange their cards and note down their losses, listened politely to their requests, and put straight the corners of cards that some player's hand had chanced to bend. At last the game was finished. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards and prepared to deal again.

"Will you allow me to take a card?" said Hermann, stretching out his hand from behind a stout gentleman who was punting.

Chekalinsky smiled and bowed silently, as a sign of acquiescence. Narumoff laughingly congratulated Hermann on his abjuration of that abstention from cards which he had practised for so long a period, and wished him a lucky beginning.

"Stake!" said Hermann, writing some figures with chalk on the back of his card.

"How much?" asked the banker, contracting the muscles of his eyes; "excuse me, I can not see quite clearly."

"Forty-seven thousand rubles," replied Hermann.

At these words every head in the room turned suddenly round, and all eyes were fixed upon Hermann.

"He has taken leave of his senses!" thought Narumoff.

"Allow me to inform you," said Chekalinsky, with his eternal smile, "that you are playing very high; nobody here has ever staked more than two hundred and seventy-five rubles at once."

"Very well," replied Hermann; "but do you accept my card or not?"

Chekalinsky bowed in token of consent.

"I only wish to observe," said he, "that although I have the greatest confidence in my friends, I can only play against ready money. For my own part, I am quite convinced that your word is sufficient, but for the sake of the order of the game, and to facilitate the reckoning up, I must ask you to put the money on your card."

Hermann drew from his pocket a bank-note and handed it to Chekalinsky, who, after examining it in a cursory manner, placed it on Hermann's card.

He began to deal. On the right a nine turned up, and on the left a three.

"I have won!" said Hermann, showing his card.

A murmur of astonishment arose among the players. Chekalinsky frowned, but the smile quickly returned to his face.

"Do you wish me to settle with you?" he said to Hermann.

"If you please," replied the latter.

Chekalinsky drew from his pocket a number of bank-notes and paid at once. Hermann took up his money and left the table. Narumoff could not recover from his astonishment. Hermann drank a glass of lemonade and returned home.

The next evening he again repaired to Chekalinsky's. The host was dealing. Hermann walked up to the table; the punters immediately made room for him. Chekalinsky greeted him with a gracious bow.

Hermann waited for the next deal, took a card and placed upon it his forty-seven thousand rubles, together with his winnings of the previous evening.

Chekalinsky began to deal. A knave turned up on the right, a seven on the left.

Hermann showed his seven.

There was a general exclamation. Chekalinsky was evidently ill at ease, but he counted out the ninety-four thousand rubles and handed them over to Hermann, who pocketed them in the coolest manner possible and immediately left the house.

The next evening Hermann appeared again at the table. Everyone was expecting him. The generals and privy councilors left their whist to watch such extraordinary play. The young officers quitted their sofas, and even the servants crowded into the room. All pressed round Hermann. The other players left off punting, impatient to see how it would end. Hermann stood at the table and prepared to play alone against the pale but still smiling Chekalinsky. Each opened a pack of cards. Chekalinsky shuffled. Hermann took a card and covered it with a pile of bank-notes. It was like a duel. Deep silence reigned around.

Chekalinsky began to deal; his hands trembled. On the right a queen turned up, and on the left an ace.

"Ace has won!" cried Hermann, showing his card.

"Your queen has lost," said Chekalinsky, politely.

Hermann started; instead of an ace, there lay before him the queen of spades! He could not believe his eyes, nor could he understand how he had made such a mistake.

At that moment it seemed to him that the queen of spades smiled ironically and winked her eye at him. He was struck by her remarkable resemblance. . . .

"The old countess!" he exclaimed, seized with terror.

Chekalinsky gathered up his winnings. For some time, Hermann remained perfectly motionless. When at last he left the table, there was a general commotion in the room.

"Splendidly punted!" said the players. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards afresh, and the game went on as usual.

HERMANN went out of his mind, and is now confined in room Number 17 of the Obukhoff Hospital. He never answers any questions, but he constantly mutters with unusual rapidity: "Three, seven, ace!" "Three, seven, queen!"

Lizaveta Ivanovna has married a very amiable young man, a son of the former steward of the old countess. He is in the service of the government, and receives a good income. Lizaveta is also supporting a poor relative. Tomsky has been promoted to the rank of captain, and has become the husband of the Princess Pauline.

The Eyrie

(Continued from page 148)

plorers Into Infinity cries aloud for a sequel. Let Martt and Frank and Frannie and Dr. Gryce go after Brett. Let Brett return. Let anything happen, but we must hear about it through your pages—soon."

Except for these five letters objecting to the story, or its ending, all the other letters received up to the time this issue goes to press have been favorable, some mildly so, but most of them enthusiastic in praise of Mr. Cummings' imaginative tale.

"*Explorers Into Infinity,* by Ray Cummings, ended splendidly, this story making me a Cummings fan," writes Herbert E. Woodburn, of Irvington, New Jersey. "Eli Colter's new story, *The Dark Chrysalis,* promises wonders, something different from the usual run."

"Here are bouquets for your shivery, delightful magazine from a new species of friend, the 'flapper' reader of WEIRD TALES," writes Cathryn M. Banks, of Staten Island, New York. "I've been reading it since the time when, a few years ago at boarding school, one of our greatest joys was to pile up on the bed after a chafing-dish party and listen while our best orator read to us from WEIRD TALES. The effect was as spooky as we could desire, for we put all the lights out, and our reader sat on the floor behind a screen, a torchlight at her elbow. To name my favorite stories is not an easy matter; I enjoy nearly all of them. The scientific ones are thrilling, educational, and some of them, I hope, prophetic. The experiences of the delightful little Frenchman, Jules de Grandin, are fascinating. *The Man Who Cast No Shadow* had enough shivers in it for two or three weird tales. But of all the grisly tales you've printed, I think the prize-winner is one you printed a year or more ago, *The Return of the Undead,* by Arthur Leeds. I nominate it as the weirdest of weird tales; the mere recollection of it has a strange effect on one. One of your most fascinating stories was *The City of Glass;* it was full of romantic glamor, yet it seemed so entirely plausible. Could one read anything ghostlier than *The Outsider* or *The Ghosts of Steamboat Coulee?* And besides all these, you have another type of story which appeals to me, perhaps, most of all—those lovely, fanciful things, such as *The Woman of the Wood,* a poetic idyl I shall long remember; and *The Greatest Gift,* one of the best love-stories I have had the pleasure of reading."

"I do not know when a story has affected me as much as the first installment of *The Dark Chrysalis,* unless it be *Dracula,* which I read many years ago," writes H. J. Herster, of Easton, Pennsylvania. "Too bad, though, it is a serial."

"May I vote for *The Dark Chrysalis* by Eli Colter as the best story in the June issue?" writes Gordon Philip England, of Sutton, Quebec. "That promises to be one of the most thrilling tales you have yet printed—which is saying a good deal."

Mrs. J. C. Murphy, of Washington, D. C., writes: "*Explorers Into Infinity* finished without a let-down, and *A Suitor From the Shades* was glorious. Practically every story in this issue was worth buying the magazine for. Can't give any knocks to this issue (June)—only shrieks of appreciation. But, in retrospect, I didn't like *Drome.* The reason I pick on it is because it let on to be something wonderful, and everybody said it was, but it fell mighty flat with me. Now *Explorers Into Infinity*—that *is* something! Each

copy of W. T. has several delicious stories, and one or two deliriously delightful ones."

"Keep up the weird-scientific stories," writes Jim McDougall of Calgary, Alberta. "Reprints are not necessary—fill this space with tales such as *Explorers Into Infinity* and *The Left Eye.*"

"Let me congratulate you on editing the most bizarre and interesting magazine on the market," writes Daniel E. Goodhue, of Boston. "Serials I don't think are an attraction to any magazine unless they are of the type of Mr. Cummings' *Explorers Into Infinity;* few are as good as that, though."

Writes Mrs. George H. Worley, of Kansas City, Missouri: "I just had to write and congratulate you on your new serial. Have read your magazine for about three years, and though you have had some wonderful stories, your new serial, *The Dark Chrysalis,* bids fair to be your best. It hits right at a thing that interests everyone—the great mystery: is there no cure for cancer? Your stories are always food for thought, and I have to hurry and read my copy so as to pass it on, as I live in an apartment house and everyone here likes WEIRD TALES."

"By the way," writes Robert Smith, Jr., of Easton, Pennsylvania, "where did you pick up that group of weird story-tellers? I am under the impression they are modern writers (excepting the monthly reprint-story) —and their names are not familiar to me as contributors to any other periodical. I am well pleased with the way your stories are told. Your authors are real story-tellers and raconteurs. Not just a mere jumble of weird words, without plot or observance of the rules of story-telling, nor yet stories that are commonplace, but really striking stories, admirably told."

Readers, your favorite story in the June issue, as shown by your votes, is the first installment of *The Dark Chrysalis,* by Eli Colter, which is closely pressed for first honors by the concluding installment of *Explorers Into Infinity,* by Ray Cummings. What is your favorite story in the present issue?

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE AUGUST WEIRD TALES ARE:

Story	Remarks
(1)----------	----------
(2)----------	----------
(3)----------	----------

I do not like the following stories:

(1)---------- Why? ----------

(2)---------- ----------

It will help us to know what kind of stories you want in Weird Tales if you will fill out this coupon and mail it to The Eyrie, Weird Tales, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

Reader's name and address:

The Bride of Osiris

(Continued from page 172)

sively masked Anubis advanced in the moving circle of light.

As Buell and Rafferty were led before the throne, the former again scanned the face of the man seated thereon. The closer view brought full recognition. He was the man of whom Doris Lee had been in mortal fear at the opera and later at the café, from in front of which she had been abducted. Evidently he had worn a heavy false beard and mustache both to serve as a disguise and to cover the odd, sickle-shaped beard which would have made him conspicuous anywhere in Chicago.

Horus of the hawk-mask stepped into the circle of light.

"Mighty Osiris," he proclaimed, "I present Dan Rafferty and Alan Buell of the upper world. They sought admittance at the gates of Karneter, saying that they bore a message to the High One."

The man on the throne looked down at them from beneath beetling brows.

"We await the message," he said.

The ibis-masked Thoth poised his pencil expectantly.

Rafferty looked at Buell and Buell looked back at Rafferty. There was a moment of ominous silence.

"Quick! The message!" snapped Horus.

Buell gazed defiantly throneward.

"I demand the immediate release of my fiancée, Doris Lee," he said.

A sneering smile curled the lips of the potentate.

"A jackal may demand his mate from a lion," he replied, "and as readily gain the favor. Your insolence is in keeping with your rashness in entering Karneter. Know you, then, that she who was Doris Lee in the upper world exists no more as

Next Month

The Wolf-Woman

By BASSETT MORGAN

They dug her out of a glacier, this golden-haired vampire of the North, and she called the white wolves to her bidding. A strange tale of dire occult evil and terrific adventures in the Northland.

Cressey found her, the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, entombed in the ice that had been her grave for centuries. When he released her from her icy tomb he unwittingly loosed a dark influence on the valley—an influence that worked weird madness on the handful of white men and drained them of their lives, as the vampire-woman thundered into the plain on the head of her mammoth and surrounded by her white wolves. This story will be printed complete in the

September Issue of

WEIRD TALES

On Sale August 1

Clip and Mail this Coupon Today!

WEIRD TALES
450 East Ohio St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $1 for special five months subscription to "Weird Tales" to begin with the September issue. (Special offer void unless remittance is accompanied by coupon.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Life's Secrets!

Amazing new book, "Safe Counsel," just out, tells you the things you want to know straight from the shoulder. Gives advice to newly married. Explains anatomy of reproductive organs, impotence, laws of sex-Life, mistakes to avoid, diseases, pregnancy, etc. Contains 9 startling sections. 1—Science of Eugenics, 2—Love, 3—Marriage, 4—Childbirth, 5—Family Life, 6—Sexual Science, 7—Diseases and Disorders, 8—Health and Hygiene, 9—Story of Life. In all, 104 chapters, 77 illustrations, 512 pages. Examine at our risk. Mailed in a plain wrapper.

Send No Money

Write for your copy today. Don't send a cent. Pay postman only $1.98, plus postage, on arrival. Money refunded if not satisfactory.
FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION
Dept. 6813, 156 No. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill.

LUCK IN LOVE

Money. Success. Happiness—all symbolized in this "Lucky Magnet" Ring. Attracts. Compels. Mystifies. BE RICH. Win at games, love, etc. *Get yours NOW!* Send No Money. Pay postman $2.39 and postage on delivery. Money Back Guaranteed.
WINEHOLT CO., MR-23, Woodbine, Pa.

Be A Detective

Fascinating work, fine pay. Course of 40 easy lessons by famous Government detective, teaches all the tricks, secrets, methods, shadowing, spotting, railroad, factory, store, hotel and police work, getting positions, etc. Only $2.98 complete. Send M. O., stamps or cash. $2
EDUCATOR PRESS, 19 Park Row, New York, N. Y., Dept. 104

BE A RAPID-FIRE TRICK CARTOONIST

$2 BUYS COMPLETE COURSE, including 40 Clever Cartoon Stunts, "How to Give a Performance," "How to Originate Ideas." Samples free.
MODERN CARTOON SERVICE,
Dept. D., 296 Bergen St. Brooklyn, N. Y.

SONG POEM WRITERS

Send for Bona Fide Proposition

RAY HIBBELER
D-50, 2104 No. Keystone Av., Chicago

LIQUOR or DRUG HABIT CURED FOREVER or NO PAY

Full treatment sent on trial. Can be given secretly in privacy of home. Guaranteed to banish forever all desire for whiskey, gin, wine, home brew, moonshine, opium, morphine, heroin, paregoric and laudanum. Costs $2.00 if cures, nothing if fails. Save him from Poison.
STANDARD LABORATORIES, Sta. N 33, BALTIMORE, MD.

MAGIC Dice, $5.00; Cards, $1.25; Inks, $1.50; Magic Fluid for Transparents, $3.00; Slick Ace Cards, $1.25; Factory Readers, $1.00. Sales Boards, etc. Catalog 10c.
CENTRAL NOVELTY COMPANY,
112 N. La Salle Street, Chicago, Ill.

TOBACCO Or Snuff Habit Cured Or No Pay

Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Full treatment sent on trial. Harmless. Costs $1.50 if it cures, nothing if it fails. Used by over 800,000 Men and Women. Superba Co. NT-17 Baltimore, Md.

OLD MONEY WANTED $2 to $600 EACH paid for hundreds of Old or Odd Coins. Keep All Old Money, it may be very valuable. Send 10 cents for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, 4x6. Guaranteed Prices. Get Posted. We pay cash.
CLARKE COIN CO., W. T. Dept., LeRoy, N. Y.

MEN WANTING FOREST RANGER JOB, $125-$200 month; nice cabin. Hunt, trap and patrol. Nat'l Forest list free. Write Rayson, Dept. B-43, Denver, Colo.

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED. PATented or Unpatented. Write Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 551 Enright, St. Louis, Mo.

such. She is being prepared for the ceremony which will be the crowning event of the great Festival of Re four days hence, when she will become Isis, bride of Osiris, and co-ruler with him of the blessed realm of Karneter. But enough of this. We must to business. He who was Dan Rafferty will henceforth be called Baku. He has been an electrician, a policeman, a sailor and a detective. Put him to work at his first occupation."

"Now how the divvil did yez know I was a trouble-shooter fer the Western Electric?" he exclaimed.

"Silence!" commanded Horus. "The mighty Osiris sees all—knows all."

The potentate struck the gong and two roaring, hideously masked Am-mits leaped into the circle of light. They seized Dan Rafferty and hurried him away, leaving Buell with Anubis, Horus and the scribbling Thoth.

"As for him who was Alan Buell in the upper world," said the potentate when the roaring had subsided, "his name shall be 'N.' We have selected him for the high honor of impersonating the Osiris N at the Festival of Re."

"May I ask," queried Buell, "the reason for this unmerited kindness?"

" 'Tis but a trifling thing, and will soon be ended," was the reply. "Before the festival is over you will have entered that inner Karneter whence no man returneth."

"You mean I am to be killed?"

"Precisely, but there is nothing about that for you to be greatly concerned over. You will not know when the blow is struck, nor will you know aught afterward, so far as this physical world is concerned."

He smote the gong and the noisy Am-mits rushed Buell off into the darkness.

The strange, thrilling and weird adventures that befell Doris and Buell and Rafferty in the underground city of Karneter will be narrated in next month's issue.

Two Black Bottles

(Continued from page 258)

the other with little smiles during my tale, I noticed, but when I suggested that they accompany me to the spot, gave various excuses for not caring to go. Though there seemed to be a limit to their credulity, they cared to run no risks. I informed them that I would go alone, though I must confess that the project did not appeal to me.

As I left the store, one old man with a long, white beard hurried after me and caught my arm.

"I'll go wi' ye, lad," he said. "It do seem that I once heared my gran'pap tell o' su'thin' o' the sort concernin' old Dominie Slott. A queer old man I've heared he were, but Vanderhoof's been worse."

Dominie Vanderhoof's grave was open and deserted when we arrived. Of course it could have been grave-robbers, the two of us agreed, and yet. . . . In the belfry the bottle which I had left upon the table was gone, though the fragments of the broken one were found on the floor. And upon the heap of yellow dust and crumpled clothing that had once been Abel Foster were certain immense footprints.

After glancing at some of the books and papers strewn about the belfry room, we carried them down the stairs and burned them, as something unclean and unholy. With a spade which we found in the church basement we filled in the grave of Johannes Vanderhoof, and, as an afterthought, flung the fallen cross upon the flames.

Old wives say that now, when the moon is full, there walks about the churchyard a gigantic and bewildered figure clutching a bottle and seeking some unremembered goal.

STANDARD TIRES $3.25
30 X 3½

NEW LOW PRICES

Size	Tire	New Tube
30x3	$3.10	$1.25
30x3 1-2	3.25	1.50
32x3 1-2	3.65	1.65
31x4 ss	4.00	1.75
32x4	4.50	1.85
33x4	5.00	1.90
34x4	5.00	2.00
32x4 1-2	5.25	2.25
33x4 1-2	5.25	2.50
34x4 1-2	5.75	2.75
30x5	6.00	3.00
33x5	6.25	3.00
35x5	6.25	3.25
29x4.40	4.50	2.25
30x5.77	6.00	3.00
31x5.25	6.50	3.25

Plus Shipping Charge

SAVE 60%

GOODRICH, GOODYEAR, FISK, ETC.
Best used tires treated with our secret process — giving THOUSANDS UNUSUAL MILEAGE

GUARANTEE: Any tire failing to give satisfaction replaced at one-half purchase price. Send $1.00 deposit on each tire. Right reserved to substitute. If you send full amount, deduct 5%.

CHICAGO TIRE & RUBBER COMPANY
3100 So. Michigan Ave. Dept. 312 Chicago

BUST DEVELOPED

My Big Three Part Treatment is the ONLY ONE that gives FULL DEVELOPMENT without bathing, exercises, pumps or other dangerous absurdities. I send you a GUARANTEED TWO DOLLAR 14-DAY TREATMENT FREE If you send a DIME toward expenses. (A Large Aluminum Box of my Wonder Cream included.) Plain wrapper. IS IT WORTH 10c TO YOU? If not, your dime back by first mail. Address NOW, with ten cents only
Madame C. I. Williams, Buffalo, N. Y.

What Do You Want?

Whatever it is we can help you get it. Just give us the chance by writing for

"Clouds Dispelled"

Absolutely Free. You will be delighted. Act today! Write NOW!!

THE BROTHERHOOD OF LIGHT
Dept. O. Box 1525, Los Angeles, Calif.

MIDGET NAME CARDS
Trade Mark. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.
THE LATEST NOVELTY 50c. Per Book

Each book contains 50 perfect little name cards, size 1¾x¾, in genuine leather case. Choice of black, tan, green or red. A perfect name card. Name in Old English type. Price complete 50c. Send stamps, coin or money order. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. *Agents Wanted.*
MIDGET CARD SHOP
86 S. Second Street, Harrisburg, Pa.

Learn How to BOX

in 20 weeks, the system of Jimmy DeForest, World's Greatest Trainer and Maker of Champions, teaches you all there is to learn about boxing and physical training. Every 6 months 30 are selected from all classes and recommended to leading promoters for engagements. Send for famous book, "The Golden Age of Boxing," full of valuable information, photos of great boxers and pupils who became successes over night. Enclose 10c to cover cost of mailing, etc.
Jimmy DeForest Boxing Course,
347 Madison Ave., Box 4520. New York City

I WANT SONG POEMS. CASPER NATHAN, E-3544 North Racine, Chicago.

THRILL-TALES

THE remarkable success of WEIRD TALES has been built on thrilling stories of a type that can be found in no other magazine; eery stories, such as Edgar Allan Poe used to write; tales that are utterly strange; stories of the spaces between the worlds; shuddery tales of horror; bizarre and fantastic stories; gripping orientales; ghost-tales, and tales of weird monstrosities; weird-scientific stories of tremendous dooms that menace the earth. Among the many thrilling stories in the next few issues will be:

THE RED BRAIN, *by Donald Wandrei*
A tale of cosmic space—the stars blotted out by great dust-clouds engulfing the universe, and only the efforts of the Red Brain to drive back the swirling seas of dust.

PICKMAN'S MODEL, *by H. P. Lovecraft*
An eldritch tale of the cellars in a New England city, and unutterable monstrosities that crept from behind the crumbling walls—a horror-tale by the author of "The Outsider" and "The Rats in the Wall."

SALADIN'S THRONE-RUG, *by E. Hoffmann Price*
A fascinating story set IN Chicago, but not OF Chicago, for it breathes of spices and incense and the weird witchery of the Orient—a tale of a strange and eery murder.

THE DARK LORE, *by Nictzin Dyalhis*
The author of "When the Green Star Waned" and "The Eternal Conflict" lets his imagination roam through the starry spaces, and builds a tale of nightmare horrors unequaled in literature.

THE POLTERGEIST, *by Seabury Quinn*
The old-fashioned ghost is a rarity in WEIRD TALES, but here is one that satisfies all requirements—a fascinating tale of Jules de Grandin.

THE DEAD WAGON, *by Greye La Spina*
A short but powerful tale of the curse that took the first-born son in each generation of Lord Melverson's family—a ghost-tale of shuddery horror.

THE MOON MENACE, *by Edmond Hamilton*
A terrifying prospect faced a darkened world—man gone forever, a lightless earth spinning blindly through the heavens, and the moon men its masters from pole to pole.

THESE are but a few of the many super-excellent stories in store for the readers of WEIRD TALES. To make sure of getting your copy each month, and thus avoid the embarrassment of finding your favorite news stand sold out, just fill out the coupon below and let us send it right to your home. That's the safest way.

WEIRD TALES,
450 E. Ohio St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $2.50 for 1 year's subscription to "Weird Tales," to begin with the September issue. ($3.00 in Canada.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

12 THRILLING MYSTERY DETECTIVE NOVELS

While they last **$1.00**

1. The Valley of Missing Men
2. Buff
3. Triangle of Terror
4. Crimson Poppies
5. The Sign of the Toad
6. The Mystery at Eagle Lodge
7. The Web
8. The Glass Eye
9. Ten Dangerous Hours
10. Disappearing Bullets
11. The Green-Eyed Monster
12. Derring-Do

THINK of it! A splendid collection of 12 astounding mystery stories for only $1.00. Marvelous tales that spread before your eyes a new and fascinating world of romance and adventure—a breathless succession of amazing episodes—and crammed with mysterious action that will hold you spellbound. They are uncommon tales that will cling to your memory for many a day and will help to pass away many a lonely hour, In convenient pocket size. Just the thing for vacation reading.

SUPPLY NEAR EXHAUSTION

This offer may be withdrawn at any time. Treat yourself to some real entertainment while you still have the chance. Send for these stories today. Do it now! **Just pin a dollar bill to the coupon.**

POPULAR FICTION PUBLISHING CO.
Dept. 33, 312 Dunham Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

POPULAR FICTION PUBLISHING CO.
Dept. 33, 312 Dunham Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

I enclose $1. Send at once, postage prepaid, the 12 stories listed in this advertisement. It is understood this $1 is payment in full.

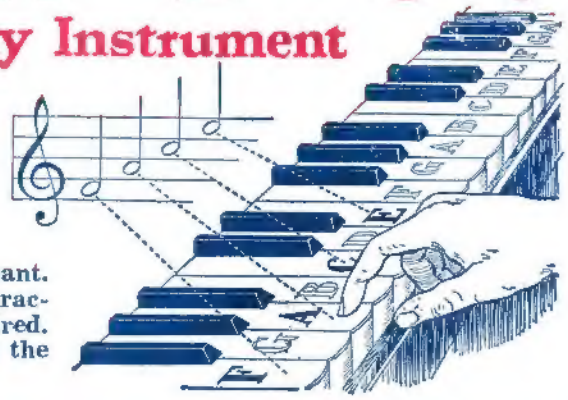
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ *State* _____

Easy as A–B–C !

You Can Play Any Instrument In a Few Months This Delightful New Easy Way!



Quickest because natural and pleasant. Grateful students say they learn in a fraction of the time old dull methods required. You play direct from the notes. And the cost is only a few cents a lesson.

LEARNING music is no longer a difficult task. If you can read the alphabet, you can now quickly learn to play your favorite instrument! A delightful new method has made it positively easy to become a capable performer within just a few months. And the cost is only a fraction of what people used to spend on the old, slow methods!

You don't need a private teacher, this new way. You study entirely at home, in the privacy of your own room, with no one to interrupt or embarrass you. And, strange as it may seem, you'll enjoy every minute of it—because the new method is *agreeable* as well as *rapid*.

No Tricks or Stunts—You Learn from "Regular" Music

You don't have to know the first thing about music in order to begin. You learn to play from actual notes, just like the best musicians do. And almost before you realize your progress, you begin playing real tunes and melodies instead of just scales. There are no trick "numbers," no "memory stunts." When you finish the U. S. School of Music course, you can pick up any piece of regular printed music and understand it! You'll be able to read music, popular and classic, and play it from the notes. You'll acquire a life-long ability to please your friends, amuse yourself, and, if you like, make money (musicians are highly paid for their pleasant work).

Whether you like the piano, violin, 'cello, organ, saxophone, or any other instrument, you can now learn to play it in an amazingly short time. By means of this newly perfected method reading and playing music is made almost as simple as reading aloud from a book. You simply can't go wrong. First, you are told how a thing is done, then a picture shows you how, then you do it yourself and hear it. No private teacher could make it any clearer. The lessons come to you by mail at regular intervals. They consist of complete printed instructions, diagrams, all the music you need, and music paper for writing out test exercises. And if anything comes up which is not **entirely plain** you can write to your instructor and get a full, prompt, personal reply!

The Surest Way to Be Popular and Have a Good Time

Do you sit "on the sidelines" at a party? Are you out of it because you can't play? Many, many people are! It's the musician who claims attention! If you play, you are always in demand. Many invitations come to you. Amateur orchestras offer you wonderful afternoons and evenings. And you meet the kind of people you have always wanted to know. So don't miss this exceptional opportunity.

PICK YOUR COURSE

Piano	Violin
Organ	Clarinet
Ukulele	Flute
Cornet	Saxophone
Trombone	Harp
Piccolo	Mandolin
Guitar	'Cello

Hawaiian Steel Guitar
Sight Singing
Voice and Speech Culture
Harmony and Composition
Drums and Traps
Automatic Finger Control
Banjo (Tenor, Plectrum or 5-String)
Piano Accordion

Free Book Explains All—Get This Special Offer

The whole interesting story about the U. S. School course cannot be told on this page. So a booklet has been printed—"Music Lessons in Your Own Home." You can have a copy absolutely free by mailing the coupon below. In the booklet you will find a special offer that makes the U. S. course available to you at a very low price—if you act promptly. With it will be sent a Demonstration Lesson which explains better than words how delightfully quick and easy this wonderful new method is. If you are really anxious to become a good player on your favorite instrument, mail the coupon now—today. Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. **U. S. School of Music, 468 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.**

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
468 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

Please send me your free book, "Music Lessons in Your Own Home," with introduction by Dr. Frank Crane, Demonstration Lesson and particulars of your Special Offer. I am interested in the following Course:

_____

Have you above instrument?_____

Name _____
(Please Write Plainly)

Address _____

City_____ State_____